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China lands probe on far side of Moon in a space milestone

Spacecraft on mission to explore mysterious side which cannot be seen from the Earth

Tan Dawn Wei
China Bureau Chief
In Beijing

A Chinese lunar probe's successful landing on the far side of the Moon has been hailed as a milestone in the history of space exploration and the country's quest to reach the top of this field.

The Chang'e-4 made a soft landing on the unexplored outer reaches of the Moon at 10.26am yesterday, sending back the first close-range pictures via the Chinese-built relay satellite Queqiao (Magpie Bridge) of that astronomical neighbourhood.

Launched from Xichang in southwest China's Sichuan province on Dec 8, the spacecraft is on a mission to seek out what lies on this mysterious "dark side" of the Moon, which cannot be seen from the Earth as the Moon is tidally locked to the Earth and rotates at the same rate that it orbits the Earth.

In a statement yesterday, the China National Space Administration said its triumphant touchdown has "opened a new chapter in human lunar exploration", and it is "willing to cooperate with space agencies, space and science research institutions and foreign space and science enthusiasts from all over the world to explore the mysteries of the universe".

More than a hundred agency personnel watched nervously from the Beijing Aerospace Flight Control

Centre as the probe began to reduce power 15km from the Moon. As it hovered about 100m above the lunar surface, detectors looked for obstacles before settling on a flat area – the Von Karman crater in the South Pole-Aitken Basin on the back of the Moon.

This southern hemisphere of the Moon features a more rugged terrain which makes landing harder. The South Pole-Aitken Basin, which measures 2,500km in diameter and is 13km deep, is also the largest, deepest and oldest impact crater on the Moon, and may yield secrets of its evolution to the Chang'e-4.

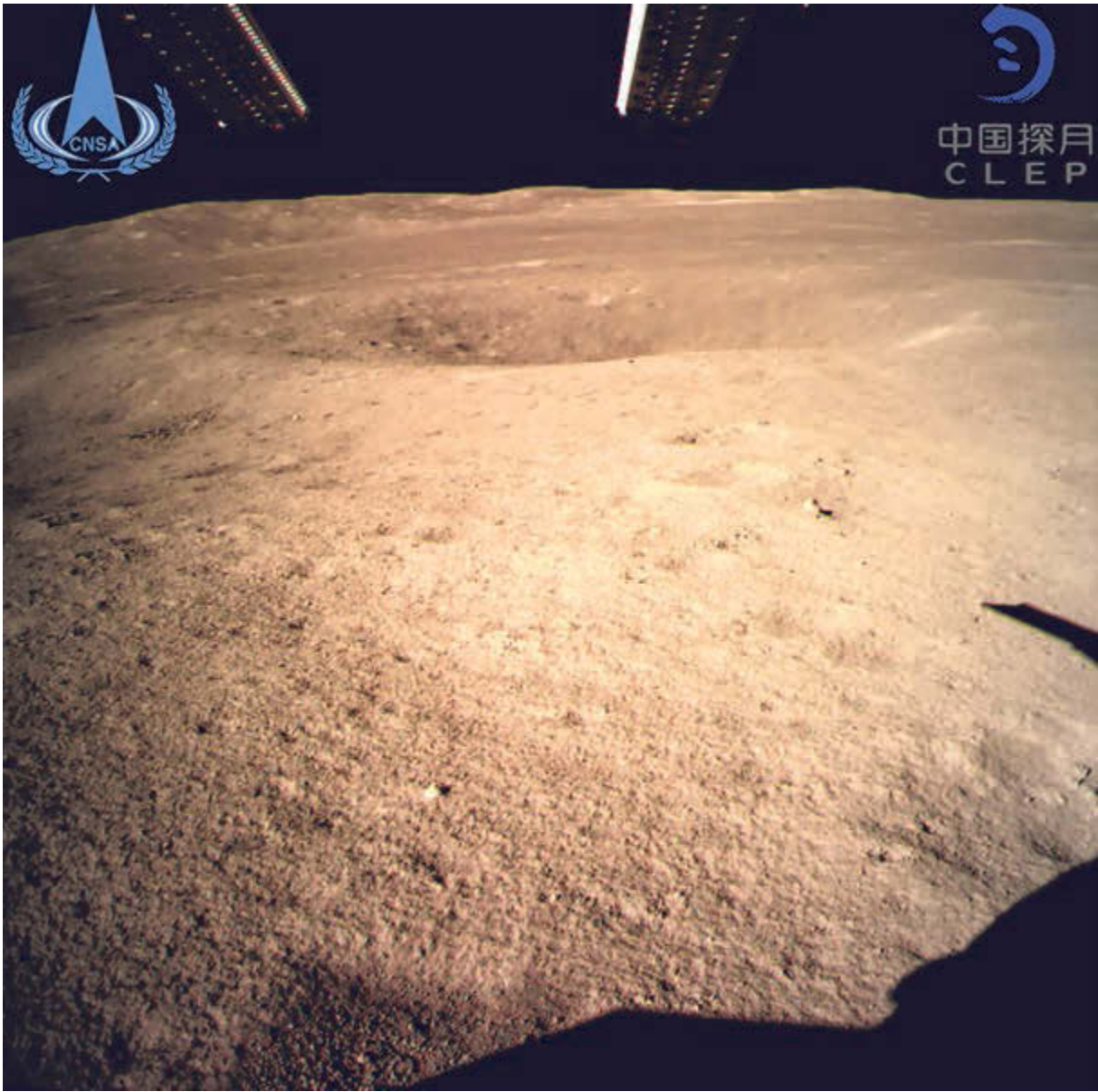
The probe, which has a lander and a rover, will conduct surveys on terrain, mineral composition and other environmental qualities in collaboration with countries including the Netherlands, Germany, Sweden and Saudi Arabia.

It also carried cotton, rapeseed, potato, Arabidopsis, fruit fly and yeast samples to form a mini biosphere in the lifeless environment, said state news agency Xinhua.

Macau University of Science and Technology professor Zhu Menghua called the landing "absolutely perfect" and a "big milestone" for China's space exploration because of the technical difficulties of landing in an uncharted territory.

"The exploration will give us more information about the Moon than we have ever known, and that is critical," said Prof Zhu.

Since launching its first astronaut into space in 2003, China has



Above: An image of the far side of the Moon taken by the Chang'e-4 probe. Left: Researchers at the Beijing Aerospace Flight Control Centre celebrating the landing yesterday. PHOTOS: AGENCY FRANCE-PRESSE, XINHUA

been on an ambitious drive to catch up with the pack led by the United States. Previously, the US and the former Soviet Union were the only countries that had managed Moon landings.

China's first lunar lander, the

Chang'e-3, soft-landed on the near-side of the Moon in 2013, becoming the first spacecraft to do so since the Soviet Union's Luna 24 in 1976.

The latest lunar landing is but one box that the Chinese space agency has ticked off. It plans to start

operating its first space station by 2022, launch probes to Mars and send astronauts out again.

While the US and Russia have the capacity to launch a similar landing on the far side, China has beaten them to it this time, though its academics put that in perspective.

"China has never said it is in a space race with the US, and has no such intention," said Professor Wang Xiangsui, director of the Research Centre of Strategic Issues at Beihang University. "The US is definitely still the leader in space technology, but China is catching up."

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SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A6

Singapore factory growth lowest since last July

Factory growth in Singapore slowed again, marking the lowest recorded reading since July last year.

The overall Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) dipped 0.4 point last month to 51.1. A reading above 50 indicates growth.

The electronics sector marked its first contraction after 27 straight months of growth in November, dipping 0.1 point to 49.8 last month, according to the Singapore Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management.

The downtrend in Singapore's PMI follows a slowdown in Asia in places like China, South Korea and Taiwan, amid a weaker global outlook for the electronics sector.

SEE BUSINESS C1

Kelantan bid to dispel rumours about King

Kelantan Deputy Menteri Besar Mohd Amar Nik Abdullah yesterday tried to quell rumours that Sultan Muhammad V will abdicate as Malaysia's King.

Datuk Amar, in response to media queries, said the state government has not received any information about this, the Malaysiakini news site reported. The 49-year-old King, who is currently on leave, is from Kelantan.

Speculation about a possible abdication appeared to have heated up soon after this week's regular meeting of the Conference of Rulers.

SEE TOP OF THE NEWS A11

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10 must-reads for today

1 Tensions rise in Kerala

Kerala was at a standstill yesterday as conservative Hindu groups protested against the state government for allowing two women to defy a traditional ban and enter a Hindu temple. Many businesses were closed amid fears of violence. One protester was killed in clashes in a southern district. **WORLD A15**

2 China makes space history

A Chinese lunar probe made a successful landing on the far side of the Moon yesterday, a feat that has been hailed as a milestone in the history of space exploration. The Chang'e-4 probe sent back the first close-range pictures of the celestial body's unexplored outer reaches via a Chinese relay satellite. **TOP OF THE NEWS A1**

3 Trade woes bite Apple

Even before Apple cut sales projections, local Apple suppliers had signalled earnings woes as trade war tensions began to bite. Apple's shares and those of its suppliers and retailers tumbled yesterday. **TOP OF THE NEWS A4**

4 Little gained from shutdown

US President Donald Trump has gained little leverage with Democrats two weeks into a partial government shutdown. The House of Representatives was set to vote on two measures yesterday to reopen government. **WORLD A10**



Hindu devotees stage a protest in Bangalore yesterday against the Kerala state government, for allowing the entry of two women at the Sabarimala temple in the southern state. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

5 Progress in Bangladesh

Once dismissed as a basket case, Bangladesh is coming into its own, in part due to the ruling Awami League, in power for a decade, pulling off yet another election victory, says associate editor Ravi Velloor in the Speaking of Asia column. **OPINION A19**

6 Cafe to lose licence

The appeal by Blu Jaz Cafe, a popular venue for live entertainment, against the cancellation of its public entertainment licence has been rejected. The decision took into account the cafe's track record, its remedial actions and the severity of its overcrowding offences. **HOME B5**

7 Guilty verdict for activist

Activist Jolovan Wham was found guilty of organising a public assembly without a permit and refusing to sign his statement at the police station after the event. The two offences took place in 2016, when he organised an event called Civil Disobedience and Social Movements. **HOME B8**

8 Jobs still safe from robots

Robots and automation have not negatively impacted jobs on a global scale, according to the World Bank chief economist. This is despite predictions that jobs are at risk of being eliminated by machines. **BUSINESS C3**

9 ITTF expands S'pore ops

The International Table Tennis Federation is expanding its operations here, with commercial staff and secretary-general Raul Chinan moving to Singapore as the governing body opens its new Asia-Pacific office in Beach Road. **SPORT C7**

10 Golden Globe predictions

Lady Gaga is a front runner for the Best Actress award at this year's Golden Globes. Who else might take home an award on Sunday (Monday Singapore time)? Here are some predictions. **LIFE D8**

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VIDEO

Hangout with ST

Multimedia journalists Alyssa Woo and Hairianto Diman discuss this week's hottest topics, such as the smoking ban in Orchard Road, and read out New Year's resolutions by viewers. <http://str.sg/hangout45>



VIDEO

Eyes ahead to 2019

Goodbye, 2018, and hello, 2019. Here are some things you should know for the year ahead, from Singapore's bicentennial celebrations to new MRT stations coming up in the north. <http://str.sg/sg2019>

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Apple's sales warning stoked global growth fears, with most markets across Asia ending lower yesterday. European markets opened weak, led by companies with exposure to China. The US tech giant lost US\$55 billion (S\$75 billion) – or nearly 8 per cent of its stock value – after the announcement. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Trade war bites as Apple leads plunge in tech stocks

S'pore suppliers had signalled earnings woes even before US tech giant cut sales projections

Grace Leong
Business Correspondent

Even before Apple cut its earnings guidance for the first time in nearly two decades – and sent its own stock and markets around the world tumbling – local Apple suppliers such as Hi-P International had sounded warnings as trade war tensions began to bite.

Listed as one of Apple's top 200 suppliers globally, the Singapore-listed contract manufacturer, which makes keypads and SIM card trays for the US tech giant, had lowered its third-quarter guidance for both revenue and profit more than two months back, on Oct 14 last year.

Apple's own shares and those of its suppliers and retailers tumbled across the globe yesterday, dragging the broader tech sector down.

The shock waves had started to spread on Wednesday in the United States after the tech giant

downgraded its first-quarter sales projections, citing slowing Chinese growth amid trade tensions with the US and fewer upgrades to iPhone models. Apple lost US\$55 billion (S\$75 billion) – or nearly 8 per cent of its stock value – after the announcement.

Most markets across Asia ended lower yesterday after Apple's sales warning stoked global growth fears. European markets opened weak, led by companies with exposure to China. There were wild moves in the currency markets as the yen, seen as a relatively safe asset, surged.

The news from Apple triggered a flash crash in the currency markets.

That added to already fragile sentiment in a week when manufacturing gauges across the world's biggest economies, including China's, all weakened, showing that the trade war is starting to have an impact on economic activity.

Technology export-dependent economies like Taiwan fell 0.65 per cent, while South Korea fell 0.81 per cent as shares of Apple suppliers Samsung Electronics and SK Hynix dropped 2.97 per cent and 4.79 per cent, respectively. Hong Kong ended 0.26 per cent lower.

In Singapore, the Straits Times In-

Most markets across Asia ended lower yesterday after Apple's sales warning stoked global growth fears. European markets opened weak, led by companies with exposure to China. There were wild moves in the currency markets as the yen, seen as a relatively safe asset, surged.

dex finished 0.86 per cent lower. Hi-P slid 2.84 per cent to 85.5 cents. Among other suppliers, Jada-son Enterprises was unchanged at two cents and Memtech International rose 1.28 per cent to 79 cents.

Printed circuit board maker Jada-son, which reportedly has a customer that supplies to Apple, swung into a net loss of \$245,000 in the third quarter, from a profit of \$1 million a year ago. The company also warned that the outlook for the second half is hit by the trade war, which affected its end customers, ac-

cording to CGS CIMB Research.

Hi-P also reported third-quarter earnings that were below expectations, blaming "a decline in market demand due to economic uncertainty, and a slower ramp-up for certain new products in the third quarter". Apple accounts for about 40 per cent of Hi-P's revenues.

DBS Group Research, which downgraded the stock to a "hold", noted: "The recent trade war between the US and China has created uncertainty and margin pressure within the supply chain. Hi-P, with six out of nine manufacturing plants in China, is not spared. Its share price has shed about 70 per cent from its peak since the trade war started. In terms of location of customers, based on full-year 2017 revenue, 59 per cent were from China and 24 per cent from US."

As a result of China's slowdown and trade tensions, 25 of the largest technology stocks have generated a median decline of 16 per cent last year compared with a median gain of 72 per cent in 2017, according to data provided by SGX MyGateway.

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SEE BUSINESS C4

Apple isn't the only casualty of China's slowdown

SYDNEY • Apple has become the latest and biggest corporate casualty of the pullback of the Chinese consumer.

The smartphone maker, which pinned its reduced revenue outlook on a slowdown in the country, joins a growing list of companies struggling as a trade war with the United States and an equity sell-off weigh on the world's second-largest economy.

Here are other prominent companies finding it harder to sell everything from cars to takeaway coffee in China.

FEDEX

The US delivery giant slashed its profit forecast in late December – just three months after raising it. While FedEx Corp's woes were not limited to China, the company cited trade tensions, especially between the US and China, among its troubles. FedEx chief executive officer Fred Smith said most of the problems he faced were due to "bad political choices".

STARBUCKS

The coffee behemoth opens a new store in China every few hours, and expects it to become the company's largest market. But last month, Starbucks Corp said sales growth in China could be as low as 1 per cent in the long term. That is slower than the 3 per cent to 4 per cent growth seen for the US and the rest of the world.

It is not clear how much China's economy or trade tensions are to blame – or if China is just losing its taste for caffeine.

TIFFANY'S

China's economic woes are more of a headache for the jeweller outside the country than inside.

Last November, Tiffany & Co reported weaker-than-expected sales and highlighted a clear pattern of Chinese shoppers cutting back on spending when they are overseas. It was a trend first highlighted by Louis Vuitton owner LVMH in October as Chinese officials cracked down on travellers returning home with undeclared goods in a bid to encourage local consumption instead.

DAIMLER

The German maker of Mercedes-Benz cars was among the first global brands to blame escalating trade tensions when it warned in June last year that retaliatory tariffs in China on car imports from the US would hit sales on the mainland. Daimler cut its profit a second time in October – but did not single out the trade war as a culprit. Jaguar Land Rover and BMW have since weighed in, saying that they have been hit by sinking demand in China.

BLOOMBERG

HDB resale transactions slide for fifth straight month

Rachel Au-Yong
Housing Correspondent

The number of Housing Board flats that changed hands last month was 23.9 per cent lower than in November, a bigger fall than a year ago, flash data from real estate portal SRX showed yesterday.

This was the fifth straight month of decline since the cooling measures announced by the Government in July, which included a tightening of loan limits.

December is typically the slowest month of the year, with many buyers and sellers on vacation, but the drop last month is larger than the 20.1 per cent registered in 2017.

In terms of absolute numbers, the resale volume last month of 1,434 flats was also smaller: 9.6 per cent lower than the 1,587 units for the same month in 2017.

"The bigger month-on-month fall and lower number of resales could be due to the effects of the recent cooling measures and concerns about the depreciating value of ageing flats this year," Orange-Tee & Tie research head Christine Sun noted.

PropNex Realty chief executive Ismail Gafoor said: "The big differ-



December is typically the slowest month of the year, with many buyers and sellers on vacation, but the drop last month in HDB resale transactions is larger than the 20.1 per cent registered in 2017. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

ence is that in 2017, market sentiment was much stronger, with many collective sales. By the middle of 2018, with the cooling measures in, buyers didn't have as much ur-

gency to get a flat. They know nothing is going to change adversely."

There were some bright spots, however, in certain segments even though the overall HDB resale price

index continued to fall.

SRX data showed that the premium that buyers were prepared to pay over market value last month was relatively larger for

four- and five-room flats.

While the overall median transaction over X-value (TOX) fell \$1,000 to negative \$2,000, the TOX for four- and five-room flats was negative \$1,000 and zero, Ms Sun noted.

TOX is a measure of whether buyers are overpaying, or underpaying, for their units, compared with a market value that is computer-generated by SRX Property.

This was also smaller compared with three-room flats and executive flats, where the TOX was negative \$5,000 and negative \$6,000, respectively.

In addition, prices of flats in non-mature estates increased by 0.2 per cent last month, whereas flats in mature estates dipped by 1 per cent.

Ms Sun said the price increase could be attributed to more flats in Sengkang and Punggol reaching their minimum occupation period and entering the resale market.

"Some of these flats are able to fetch good prices as they are new and well-designed. The Government's plans to further develop Punggol into the next digital district may have also increased the attractiveness of these flats," she said.

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DOUBLE WHAMMY

The bigger month-on-month fall and lower number of resales could be due to the effects of the recent cooling measures and concerns about the depreciating value of ageing flats this year.



ORANGETEE & TIE RESEARCH HEAD
CHRISTINE SUN

DIFFERENT CONDITIONS IN 2018

The big difference is that in 2017, market sentiment was much stronger, with many collective sales. By the middle of 2018, with the cooling measures in, buyers didn't have as much urgency to get a flat. They know nothing is going to change adversely.



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Lunar probe lands over 12 breathtaking minutes

Chinese probe touches down on a crater in a pre-selected area

BEIJING • Over about 12 dramatic minutes, China's Chang'e-4 probe descended and softly touched down on a crater on the far side of the Moon yesterday in a space first.

The probe, comprising a lander and a rover, landed at a pre-selected landing area at longitude 177.6 deg east and latitude 45.5 deg south on the far side of the Moon at 10.26am, the China National Space Administration announced.

Chinese space experts chose the Von Karman Crater in the South Pole-Aitken Basin as the landing site for Chang'e-4, amid rugged, high mountains and lofty hills.

Measuring 180km in diameter, Von Karman is relatively flat in its bottom, which made it the best choice for landing. The landing site was surrounded by mountains as high as 10,000m.

One of the designers of the lander, Mr Li Fei, said that when the process began, an engine was ignited to lower the craft's relative velocity from 1.7km per second to close to zero, and the probe's attitude

was adjusted to face the Moon and descend vertically.

When it descended to an altitude of about 2,000m, its cameras took pictures of the lunar surface so the probe could identify large obstacles such as rocks or craters, said Mr Wu Xueying, deputy chief designer of the Chang'e-4 probe.

At 100m above the surface, it hovered to identify smaller obstacles and measure the slopes on the lunar surface, Mr Wu said. After calculations, the probe found the safest site, and continued its descent.

When it was 2m above the surface, the engine stopped, and the

spacecraft landed, with four legs cushioning against the shock.

Chang'e-4 made an almost vertical landing, said Mr Wu Weiren, chief designer of China's lunar exploration programme.

Mr Zhang He, executive director of the Chang'e-4 probe project, from the China Academy of Space Technology, said: "We chose a vertical descent strategy to avoid the influence of the mountains on the flight track."

The whole process was automated, with no intervention from ground control, but relay satellite Queqiao (Magpie Bridge) transmitted images of the landing process back to Earth, he said.

The relay satellite was launched in May and is now running on a halo orbit about 65,000km from the Moon, where it can see both Earth and the Moon's far side.

The Von Karman Crater is named after a Hungarian-American mathematician, aerospace engineer and physicist and is located within the Aitken Basin, the largest, deepest and oldest crater in the solar system.

The Aitken Basin is about 2,500km in diameter and 13km in depth.

The basin may contain information about the Moon that has so far eluded scientists, such as whether it once had water. Exploration in this area will also provide first-hand data and clues on the evolution of the Moon, Earth and solar system.

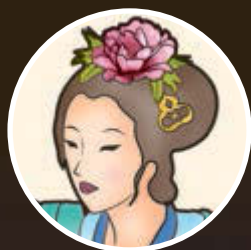
An alternative site had been identified in case the landing was not successful. This was the Chretien Crater, situated about longitude 13 deg away from Von Karman. The plan was that if Chang'e-4 failed to touch the surface of Von Karman on the first day, it could land in the alternative area on the second day.

Chang'e-4 began its life as a backup for China's Chang'e-3 probe, which was launched in 2013 and was the first Chinese spacecraft to soft-land on and explore an extraterrestrial object.

Many of the components and parts for the probes were designed and manufactured together. However, Chang'e-3 landed on the Sinus Iridum, or the Bay of Rainbows, on the moon's near side. XINHUA

Mission to discover the unknown

China successfully landed Chang'e-4 on the far side of the Moon yesterday, a historic first.



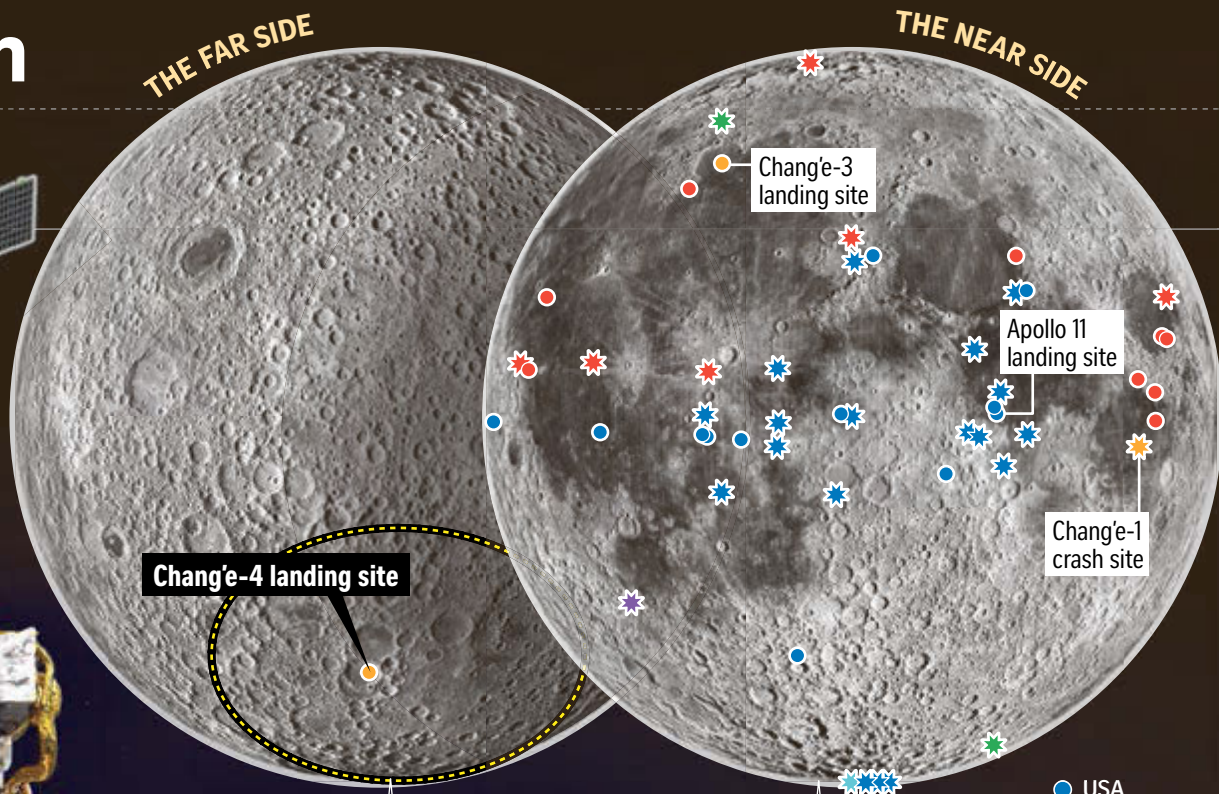
- The Chang'e-4 landed in the South Pole-Aitken Basin, the Moon's largest and oldest impact crater, at 10.26am yesterday.

- Named for Chang'e, the Chinese goddess of the Moon who, according to legend, lives there with a jade rabbit.

- It is carrying instruments to analyse the unexplored region's geology, as well as to conduct biological experiments.



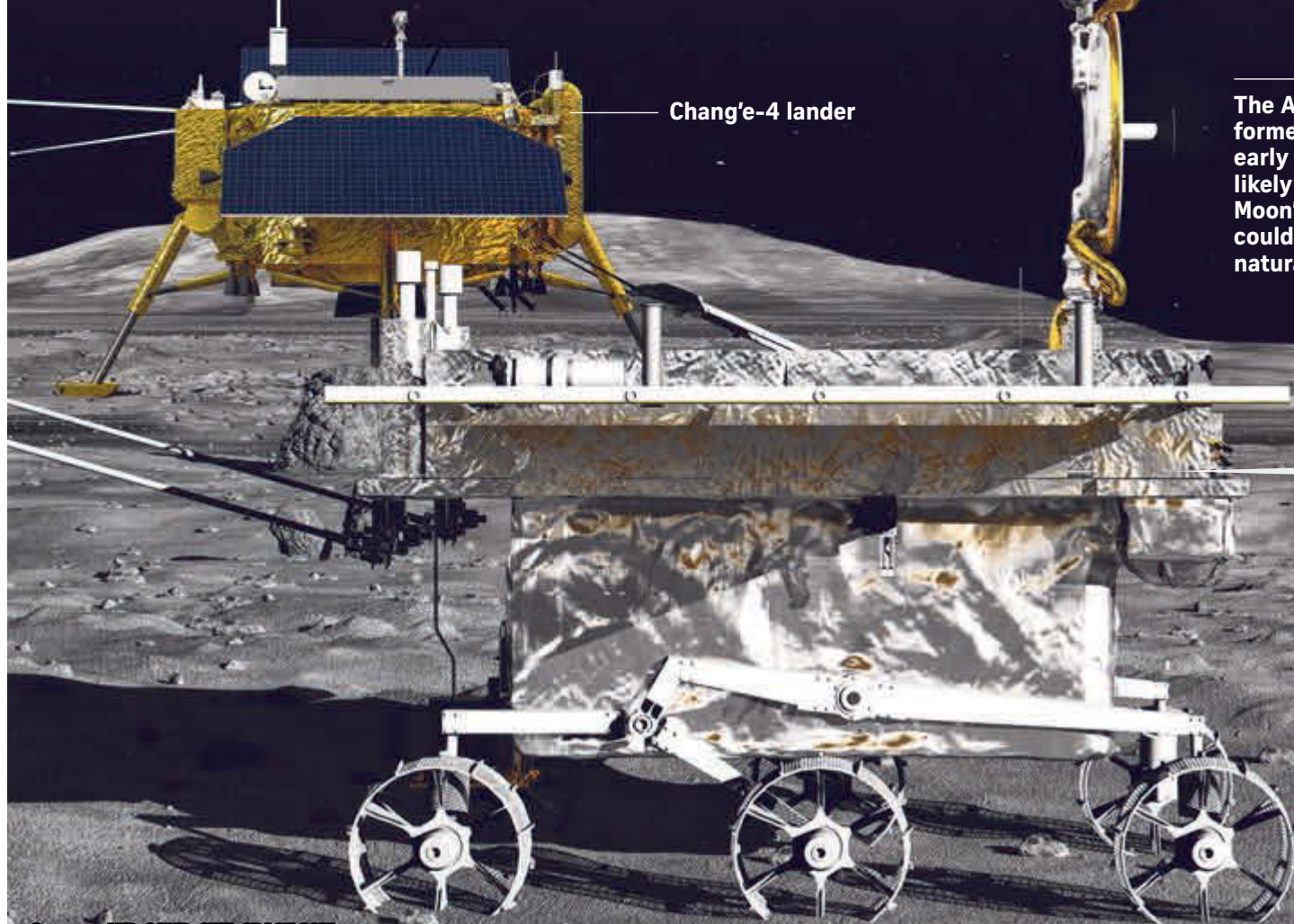
The Queqiao satellite will relay data to the Earth from the far side of the Moon.



The Aitken basin is thought to have been formed during a gigantic collision very early in the Moon's history. The collision is likely to have thrown up material from the Moon's interior, meaning that Chang'e-4 could provide new clues as to how the natural satellite was formed.

Other lunar landings and crashes, all on the near side of the Moon, the side that is always visible from the Earth.

● USA
● USSR/Russia
● China
● Japan
● European Space Agency
● India
✱ Crash (intentional or accidental)



Chang'e-4 lander

The Chang'e-4 rover is 1.5m long and about 1m wide and tall, with two foldable solar panels and six wheels. China's last lunar rover – named Yutu, or Jade Rabbit – ceased operation in August 2016 after 972 days of service on the Moon's surface as part of the Chang'e-3 mission.

A Long March 3B rocket lifted off on Dec 8 last year carrying the Chang'e-4 from the Xichang Satellite Launch Centre in China.



Sources: AFP, SCMP, CNN, SPACE.COM
PHOTOS: CHINA NATIONAL SPACE ADMINISTRATION, AFP, NASA
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Far side of the Moon: What China and the world hope to find

NEW YORK • In a spaceflight first, China's Chang'e-4 has landed where no spacecraft has touched down in one piece before: The far side of the Moon.

"This is a historic step in international scientific exploration of the moon, opening up the 'Luna Incognita' of the lunar far side to surface exploration for the first time," said Dr James Head, a planetary scientist at Brown University.

If successful, the mission could answer fundamental questions about the Earth's only natural satellite. There are still mysteries, for example, about the Moon's formation and early evolution which, in turn, hold clues to the history of the solar system.

The mission will also conduct the first radio astronomy experiments from the Moon's far side and the first investigations to see whether plants can grow on the Moon – a crucial step towards long-term human missions beyond the Earth.

THE MOON HAS TWO SIDES

If you were to watch the Moon over the course of a month, the "Man in the Moon" would never

truly disappear. Despite the Moon's phases, he is always there, keeping a watchful eye over you from his heavenly perch.

That is because the Moon is tidally locked with the Earth. It rotates exactly once every time it circles our planet, thus keeping the same hemisphere pointing towards the Earth at all times. Astronomers refer to the side we always see from the Earth as the "near side" and the side we can never see as the "far side".

IT IS NOT REALLY THE 'DARK SIDE'

While the far side can never be seen from the Earth, it is still illuminated by the Sun and has the same phases as the near side. There is no permanently "dark side" of the Moon, although it has been described this way in popular culture to refer to the Moon's unknown side.

A FLOOD THAT NEVER CAME

When the Soviet spacecraft Luna 3 sent back the first images of the far side of the Moon in 1959, it revealed a world that looked vastly different from the one we see.

The face of the "Man in the Moon" on the near side is so notice-

able because it is composed of dark areas, which stand out against the light lunar soil.

Those dark areas formed when ancient asteroids struck the Moon's surface, unleashing lava that darkened the facade and smoothed it, erasing the records from previous impacts.

But when ancient asteroids struck the far side of the Moon, there were no floods of lava. The impacts simply left a surface pockmarked with craters.

That makes the far side much lighter, much older and much more heavily cratered than the near side.

Some astronomers suspect the dichotomy arises because the crust on the near side is much thinner than that of the far side.

That would make it easier for magma to emerge on the near side, explained Dr Briony Horgan, a planetary scientist at Purdue University.

But why the crust's thickness would vary so dramatically from one hemisphere to the next remains a mystery. And Dr Horgan is hopeful that Chang'e-4 will provide hints to the answer.

A TREASURE TROVE THAT IS ALWAYS OUT OF VIEW

The early history of the solar system was violent. That is when large objects – asteroids or comets – pounded the rocky planets and left craters, some that are more than 950km across.

But most evidence of this tumultuous past has disappeared, erased by time. On the Earth and other rocky worlds, volcanoes have washed away these craters over billions of years.

The far side of the Moon has retained a pristine record of its youth, particularly the number of times that ancient objects pummeled its surface. "The history of the very early solar system is locked up in the rocks of the far side," Dr Horgan said.

LAND ON THE FAR SIDE, SEE THE UNIVERSE

The Earth is loud. Any radio antenna will reveal a symphony of strange noises that emanate from cellphones, TV stations, power lines, electrical fences, distant lightning, GPS satellites, cars, Wi-Fi and, well, radios, to name a few.

But the Moon shields the far side

from much of that chatter, thus creating the ideal location to study the radio universe.

That is why astronomers have long dreamed of building a radio telescope on the far side of the Moon.

"We use radio wavelengths to probe everything from black holes in the local neighbourhood to distant galaxies, so a radio observatory on the far side could be a huge boon to astronomy," Dr Horgan said.

"The Chang'e-4 mission will be the first mission to test out this theory and to see just how much better the lunar far side is for radio observations than our observatories back on Earth."

A future lunar observatory – if it works as intended – could improve the study of phenomena such as the primordial clouds of hydrogen gas that coalesced into the universe's first stars.

"We would be able to listen to a distant echo of the Big Bang and see the universe in a state before the first-ever stars formed," said Dr Heino Falcke, a radio astronomer at Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands.

Such a signal would allow astronomers to probe the early development of the universe.

Dr Falcke pointed to the famous cosmic heat map of the universe as it appeared only 370,000 years after the Big Bang, also known as the cosmic microwave background.

"That was a baby picture," he said, but from the far side of the Moon, it might be possible to "see a movie of the evolution of the young universe from toddler to puberty".

SEEING WHAT ELSE MIGHT GROW ON THE FAR SIDE

Chang'e-4 is also carrying an on-board experiment to test how well plants – specifically potatoes and small flowering Arabidopsis plants – grow on the Moon, which could contribute to China's human spaceflight goals.

It is the first mini-greenhouse to land on another world in the solar system.

Dr Anna-Lisa Paul, a horticultural scientist at the University of Florida in Gainesville, said the tiny experiment "is a step forward in preparing people to return to the Moon for longer than a brief visit". NYTIMES

Crabtree and Evelyn to close stores as it goes online only

Bankruptcy protection filed in Canada; some of its 12 S'pore outlets already empty of goods

Tiffany Fumiko Tay

Bath and body product retailer Crabtree and Evelyn will be shutting its 12 stores here in the coming months as it moves its operations online, with some outlets already emptied of goods.

The United Kingdom-based company filed for bankruptcy protection in Canada last month amid "significant losses" that it attributed to changing consumer demand, the rise of e-commerce and long-term declines in traditional retail traffic, according to Canadian news reports.

The Straits Times understands that Crabtree and Evelyn is moving its business fully online, and that all physical stores will be closing in phases over the next few months save for a new retail concept store in the London borough of Islington. The company declined to comment when contacted.

Long queues were seen at its in-store closing-down sales in Singapore during the Christmas period, with discounts of up to 70 per cent on items such as gift sets and skincare products.

Its stores at Suntec City and Plaza Singapura were not open when The Straits Times visited over the last two days, while outlets at Raffles City, Ngee Ann City, Paragon and VivoCity still had items for sale on half-empty shelves.

ST understands that the brand's VIP membership programme ceased on Dec 31, and a new programme is being created for customers of the e-commerce site. All existing points must be redeemed and vouchers used by Jan 31.

Some customers complained on Crabtree and Evelyn's Singapore Facebook page that they were left with hundreds of dollars' worth of vouchers as they could not be used on discounted items.

ST understands that non-sale products will be made available from Jan 9 to Jan 31 at the Crabtree and Evelyn Paragon and Ngee Ann City stores for voucher use, while stocks last.

Crabtree and Evelyn, founded in the United States in 1972, is currently owned by Hong Kong investment holding company Nan Hai Corporation.

According to Nan Hai's 2018 interim report, Crabtree and Evelyn is investing in optimising its supply chain and research and development, with 58 new products expected to be launched this year.

It is also developing its online sales platforms, with e-commerce sites launched in countries such as Australia, Singapore and Malaysia as of last year.

Nan Hai did not respond to queries.

Crabtree and Evelyn had previously filed for bankruptcy protection in the US and closed some of its stores there in 2009, when the company was owned by Kuala Lumpur Kepong Berhad, a Malaysian multinational company.

Housewife Lillian Loh, who bought two bath and skincare gift sets from the Ngee Ann City outlet

yesterday, said she was sad to see the stores go.

"They have the best hand creams and soap. At least I can still buy them online," said Ms Loh, 34.

tiffanyt@sph.com.sg



Half-empty shelves in Crabtree and Evelyn's VivoCity outlet yesterday. Long queues were seen at the United Kingdom-based bath and body product retailer's in-store closing-down sales in Singapore during the Christmas period, with discounts of up to 70 per cent. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

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The Straits Times understands that Crabtree and Evelyn is moving its business fully online, and that all physical stores will be closing in phases over the next few months save for a new retail concept store in the London borough of Islington.



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The coastal theme runs through the new facility on the third floor of VivoCity mall – from its blue-green colour scheme to deck chairs for readers to relax on as they browse the refreshed collection of 200,000 books. ST PHOTOS: KEVIN LIM

Sweeping sea view at VivoCity library

library@harbourfront features coastal theme and has strong focus on digital technologies

Jolene Ang

Visitors may find it a challenge to keep their eyes on a book all the time at the new library@harbourfront, with its location on the third level of VivoCity offering sweeping views of the sea and Sentosa.

The coastal theme runs through the facility, which opens on Jan 12 – from its blue-green colour scheme to deck chairs for readers to relax on as they browse the refreshed collection of 200,000 books.

Spanning 3,000 sq m, or about half a football field, it is the biggest of 13 libraries located in a mall here. There are 26 public libraries in Singapore. The latest at VivoCity has a seating capacity of 460, with two separate zones for adults and children, to help with noise reduction and crowd management.

The section for children will feature a dedicated area for children to develop problem-solving and early literacy skills.

Children can engage in paper crafting activities and explore word puzzles on their own, and read augmented reality books – library@harbourfront has the largest collection of such titles to complement its digital focus – on topics such as space, animals and body health.

The books have QR codes, which users can scan using apps downloaded from the App Store or Google Play Store, to make the books “come alive” on their mobile devices.

There are six learning pods for adults to access digital content and resources to upgrade their skills, such as TED Talks videos and online courses from LyndaLibrary.

LyndaLibrary is an e-learning courseware that offers an on-demand library of instructional videos covering topics such as business, creative design and technology.

The adult zone will be run by volunteers, similar to the arrangement at a number of existing libraries, including library@chinatown and Bukit Panjang Public Library.

The new library replaces Bukit Merah Public Library in Bukit Merah Central, which closed on Nov 30 last year.

News of the relocation did not go down well with some Bukit Merah residents, who started a petition to keep the library in its original location, where it had been since 1982.

In response, the National Library Board (NLB) set up 12 reading corners in the area, offering more than



The children's zone of the new library features a dedicated area for children to develop problem-solving and early literacy skills. They can also engage in paper crafting activities and explore word puzzles on their own, and read augmented reality books – the new library has the largest collection of such titles to complement its digital focus.



Visitors can browse e-newspapers and e-magazines at the reading lounge of the library@harbourfront. The library has a seating capacity of 460.



The library features six learning pods for adults to access digital content and resources to upgrade their skills, such as TED Talks videos and online courses.

5,000 books and 250 seats in total.

Retiree Ho Hew Lee, 76, who has been volunteering at public libraries for about 10 years, will be deployed at the library@harbourfront.

He helps senior citizens learn how to use the new NLB mobile app, digital borrowing machine and e-newspapers. He also conducts digital literacy workshops for seniors.

“Volunteering is a way for me to

make friends. Given my background, it is easy for me to bridge the digital divide and learn how to use new technologies,” said the retired electrical engineer.

NLB's assistant chief executive of public libraries Catherine Lau said library@harbourfront has a strong focus on digital technologies.

This is in keeping with other libraries such as library@chinatown,

library@orchard and library@esplanade which have collections in Chinese arts and heritage, design, and performing arts, respectively.

Ms Lau said: “We want to inspire our readers to come and to learn beyond the horizon, discover new things and embark on a journey of lifelong learning.”

jolenezl@sph.com.sg

3,000

Size of the new library in sq m – or about half a football field. It is the biggest of 13 libraries located in a mall here. There are 26 public libraries in Singapore.



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Kelantan official tries to dispel rumours of King stepping down

State's Deputy Menteri Besar says his govt has no news of Malaysian King giving up role

KOTA BARU • Kelantan's Deputy Menteri Besar Mohd Amar Nik Abdullah yesterday tried to tamp down talk that the Malaysian King might be stepping down from the throne, asking the public not to believe in social media rumours.

Datuk Amar told reporters that the state government has not received any information about this, the Malaysiakini news site reported. He was responding to questions from the media in Kota Baru, Kelantan's state capital, about rumours on social media that Sultan Muhammad V will abdicate soon from his role as Yang di-Pertuan Agong, as the country's king is officially called. The 49-year-old ruler is from Kelantan.

"The state government has no knowledge. If it is a rumour, don't believe it."

"We shouldn't be surprised because people say many things in rumours, not only about the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, but also the government. So, don't believe the rumours," Mr Amar was quoted as saying by the news site.

The Kelantan ruler is currently on leave.

Mr Amar, a vice-president of Parti Islam SeMalaysia (PAS), which controls the Kelantan state legislature, said the attorney-general should step in to stop the circulation of fake news, the New Straits Times (NST) Online quoted him as saying.

"It is the duty of the attorney-general to ensure that incorrect information does not spread among the people," he said. "We are talking about an institution, the Yang di-Pertuan Agong is an institution, the Sultan is an institution," he added.

Sultan Muhammad V went on leave from Nov 2 to rest "following treatment", the Bernama news agency had reported.

In late November, media reports said he had married a beauty queen from Russia, Ms Oksana Voevodina, in Moscow.

When asked about this at the time, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said he had no official knowledge. "I don't know. I don't have any official confirmation, so I can't say anything," he said.

During the King's absence, his duties as Malaysia's constitutional monarch were taken up by the Sultan of Perak, Sultan Nazrin Shah, 62.

Sultan Nazrin left the national palace Istana Negara on Dec 31 at the end of his tenure as acting king, according to media reports.

Under Malaysia's unique rota-

tional system among the nine Malay royal houses, the sultans take turns to be appointed the king every five years.

Sultan Muhammad V was proclaimed Malaysia's 15th king in December 2016.

Speculation about a possible abdication appeared to have heated up soon after this week's regular meeting of the Conference of Rulers. Its members are the titular heads of Malaysia's 13 states - the nine sultans and four state governors (Penang, Melaka, Sabah, Sarawak).

Adding to the speculation, Tun Dr Mahathir, in a post on his blog

on Wednesday titled "Rule of Law", said that every Malaysian, including the sultans, must follow the law. "The rule of law applies to everyone from the rulers to the prime minister and ministers, to the civil servants and ordinary citizens," he wrote.

"There is no provision which exempts anyone from the rule of law. For the rulers, there is a special court, but the laws are the same as the laws applicable to ordinary citizens. The rulers too must respect the laws."

He did not explain what he meant, including what he wrote in the next sentence: "It is disturbing to see blatant breaches of the law being perpetrated in the mistaken belief that immunity has somehow been accorded."



Sultan Muhammad V attending the opening ceremony of Malaysia's Parliament in Kuala Lumpur last July. It was reported earlier that the King had gone on leave from Nov 2 to rest "following treatment". PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

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DON'T BELIEVE RUMOURS

The state government has no knowledge. If it is a rumour, don't believe it. We shouldn't be surprised because people say many things in rumours, not only about the Yang di-Pertuan Agong, but also the government. So, don't believe the rumours.



KELANTAN DEPUTY MENTERI BESAR MOHD AMAR NIK ABDULLAH, on speculation that the Malaysian King will be stepping down from the throne.

WORLD



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A cyclist snapping a photo outside the closed entrance to Fort Point in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in San Francisco, California, on Wednesday.
PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Little to show from govt shutdown for Trump

No funding for border wall, no pay cheques for federal workers

WASHINGTON • US President Donald Trump has gained little leverage with Democrats two weeks into the partial government shutdown of his own making, with fewer possible escape routes and a more treacherous path ahead as the GOP relinquishes control of the House.

Mr Trump turned to the bully pulpit on the first working day of the new year with a stream of tweets and an extended televised Cabinet meeting to press his case for funding the construction of a wall along the US-Mexico border.

Later, he and top congressional leaders met for what was billed as a briefing on border security issues in the Situation Room at the White

House. Democrats, who were set to take over the majority in the House yesterday, were unmoved.

The White House meeting quickly devolved into political posturing. Representative Nancy Pelosi of California, who was poised to be elected House Speaker yesterday, said the chamber would vote on two measures to reopen the government that mirror legislation that the Senate had already passed with Republican support only to be rejected by Mr Trump.

Mr Trump invited the lawmakers to return to the White House today, following yesterday's congressional leadership elections.

It is unclear whether the Democrats will accept his offer, although he sounded somewhat conciliatory on Wednesday evening, tweeting: "I remain ready and willing to work with Democrats to pass a Bill that se-

If he accepts a funding deal from Democrats that offers little or no money for wall construction, Mr Trump risks alienating a base that has provided steady support, and undermining his self-proclaimed status as a master negotiator. Allowing the shutdown to drag on carries risks as well.

cures our borders, supports the agents and officers on the ground, and keeps America Safe. Let's get it done!"

But Ms Pelosi and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer instead signalled that they saw a political opportunity to gain further leverage against the White House.

The legislation they plan to pass would reopen the affected government departments, provide US\$1.3 billion (\$\$1.8 billion) for border security on a pro-rated basis and give time for further negotiations on the issue. The measure would fund the Department of Homeland Security only until Feb 8, and would not include money for the construction of the border wall.

That is not enough for Mr Trump, and Democrats will cast the President as holding federal workers hostage for the wall. That approach – and the underlying intransigence – has been made easier by a president who has misplayed his hand repeatedly during negotiations.

Mr Trump's most severe misstep was self-inflicted. In a meeting with Ms Pelosi and Mr Schumer last month, the President defiantly boasted that he would be "proud" to "take the mantle" of shutting the government down if he did not get the more than US\$5 billion he was seeking to build the wall.

Mr Trump's unequivocal embracing of responsibility for the shutdown has helped deflect other news – such as the fatal shooting of a California police officer, allegedly by an undocumented immigrant, and Ms Pelosi's vacation at a Hawaiian resort as hundreds of thousands of federal workers worried about their pay – that may have eroded the Democrats' political standing.

If he accepts a funding deal from Democrats that offers little or no money for wall construction, Mr Trump risks alienating a base that has provided steady support, and undermining his self-proclaimed status as a master negotiator.

Allowing the shutdown to drag on carries risks as well. While Mr Trump can continue to elevate immigration as a potent political wedge, a prolonged shutdown could add uncertainty to already volatile markets as federal workers and contractors begin missing pay cheques and invoices.

Yet with Democrats showing little inclination to budge as the shutdown stretches into its third week, Mr Trump posed the key question to himself rhetorically as he met his Cabinet on Wednesday.

"Well, I'd rather not say it – could we do it for a little bit less?" Mr Trump said. BLOOMBERG

Pelosi set to make history in return as House Speaker

Nirmal Ghosh
US Bureau Chief
In Washington

Some call her a San Francisco latte liberal. But her daughter Alexandra says all you need to know about Nancy Pelosi is: "She'll cut your head off and you won't even know you're bleeding."

The 78-year-old Ms Pelosi was set to be elected Speaker of the House of Representatives in Washington yesterday (this morning Singapore time) – and has already found herself toe to toe with President Donald Trump in a showdown over funding for the border wall with Mexico that he promised his base.

She will be wielding the gavel in a House that will have a record number of women – 102, comprising 23.4 per cent of the chamber's voting members. Before the November 2018 midterm elections, the record for women in the House was 19 per cent of seats.

Ms Pelosi, a mother of five, with nine grandchildren, is a formidable

political operator who has been in Congress for 31 years and the leader of the Democratic Party for 16 years.

"No one ever won betting against Nancy Pelosi," her daughter Alexandra Pelosi, a film-maker, told CNN.

Ms Pelosi will be the first lawmaker in more than half a century to hold the office of Speaker of the House twice.

Her signature achievement legislatively is the Affordable Care Act, commonly known as Obamacare, which was passed towards the end of her first term as Speaker from 2007 to 2011.

Still, with the stunning victory in 2016 of the insurgent Republican presidential candidate Mr Trump, many in the Democratic Party were beginning to question whether Ms Pelosi should step aside for someone younger.

But on the coat-tails of the November 2018 victory in which the party wrested back control of the House, she secured enough support to get the Speakership by promising to stay for only one term.

"This is legacy-building time,"



Ms Nancy Pelosi will be the first lawmaker in more than half a century to hold the office of Speaker of the House twice. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Professor Jennifer Lawless, an expert on women in politics at the University of Virginia, told The New York Times.

"If she can be the person who is remembered for holding Trump accountable, or not letting him put forward facts that are not facts, if she can be the one who just calmly sits there and holds his feet to the fire, in a lot of ways, that's just as important as anything else she does."

Ms Pelosi already had a face-to-face showdown with the President before Christmas at the White House where she and Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer argued with Mr Trump over funding for the wall.

At one point, she said curtly to the President: "Please don't characterise the strength that I bring to this meeting." Later, she told a CNN reporter: "It goes to show you: You get into a tinkle contest with a skunk, you get tinkle all over you."

While operating on a divided Capitol Hill – the Senate is still majority Republican – Ms Pelosi will have a new-look Congress.

More than a third of the 102 women in the House won their seats for the first time in the midterm elections – making them the largest female freshman class in history, according to the Centre for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University. They include

new stars of the left like 29-year-old New York congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a Democrat.

There are more women in the Democratic ranks in both the House and Senate. Together, there are 108 Democratic women and 23 Republican women in the new Congress.

"The strong majority of new women members are Democrats so they will have success in the House because they are a majority," Dr Kelly Dittmar, assistant research professor at the Centre for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, told The Straits Times.

But a lot of what they want to get done will be challenged in the Senate and by the President, she said. Just like their male counterparts, the women will be under the constraint of divided control of Congress.

It is always positive for legislative institutions to better reflect the constituents they serve, she added.

Said Dr Dittmar: "Now you see not only an increase in representation by gender, but the women bring other layers of diversity in terms of race, age and professional background. Collectively, that diversity should yield better decision-making and agendas that better reflect the needs of the fuller population."

She added: "I hope (this) encourages other women to consider ways to get more engaged in electoral politics, whether it is by running themselves or supporting other women candidates."

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TINKLE CONTEST

It goes to show you: You get into a tinkle contest with a skunk, you get tinkle all over you.

MS NANCY PELOSI, returning House Speaker, telling a CNN reporter about her meeting with President Donald Trump.

BUILDING A LEGACY

If she can be the person who is remembered for holding Trump accountable, or not letting him put forward facts that are not facts, if she can be the one who just calmly sits there and holds his feet to the fire, in a lot of ways, that's just as important as anything else she does.

PROFESSOR JENNIFER LAWLESS, an expert on women in politics at the University of Virginia.

Tourists flee Thai islands as storm closes in

Pabuk set to hit Phangan, Tao and Samui isles today, before making for the mainland

BANGKOK • Tens of thousands of tourists have fled some of Thailand's most popular islands as Tropical Storm Pabuk closes in and threatens to batter the southern part of the kingdom with heavy rains, winds and 7m-high waves.

Koh Phangan and Koh Tao, packed with holidaymakers during the peak Christmas and New Year season, have emptied out since Wednesday as tourists squeeze onto ferries bound for the southern Thai mainland, with swimming banned and boats set to suspend services.

Pabuk, Thailand's first tropical storm in the area outside of the monsoon season for around 30 years, is poised to hit the two islands as well as neighbouring Koh Samui this afternoon, before cutting into the mainland.

Packing winds of 104kmh, Pabuk is unlikely to intensify into a full-blown typhoon, according to fore-casters.

"But we expect waves as high as 5m or 7m near the eye of the storm," said Thai Meteorological Department head Phuwieng Prakamaintara.

No official evacuation order has been given but tourists are leaving in droves, with those unable to book flights preparing to see out the storm on the eerily deserted islands.

"I think the islands are almost empty... Between 30,000 and 50,000 have left since the New Year's Eve countdown parties," Koh Phangan district chief Krikkrui Songthanee told Agence France-Presse.

The acting mayor of Koh Tao, one of South-east Asia's finest diving spots, said boats to Chumphon on the mainland were crammed with tourists, but several thousand guests were still on the island and likely to brave the storm.

"It's difficult to predict the severity of the storm so people should comply with the authorities' recommendations."

On Koh Samui, a Russian man drowned on Wednesday after his family ignored warnings not to go into the sea.

"A family of three went swimming but the strong current caught a 56-year-old man who drowned," Captain Boonnam Srinarat of Samui Police told AFP.

He added: "Island officials announced the warning and put up the red 'danger' flags... but maybe the family did not think the situation was that serious."

Bangkok Airways, which has a virtual monopoly on the air route to

the island, cancelled all flights in and out of Samui today.

The authorities have prepared shelters for tourists who decided to wait out the storm or who could not secure seats on ferries for the mainland before services were suspended late yesterday.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Election may clash with coronation preparations, says Thai junta



A portrait of Thai King Maha Vajiralongkorn and his mother, Queen Sirikit, in Bangkok. Thailand's government has said a general election planned for Feb 24 may clash with preparations for the coronation of the King, and that it will be up to the Election Commission to decide whether the timing of the polls is appropriate.

The vote would start a chain of events required under the Constitution that may conflict with the coronation of King Vajiralongkorn in May, said Deputy Prime Minister Wissanu Krea-ngam.

He met members of the Election Commission yesterday to discuss the issue. In November, Mr Wissanu said that if the election is held in February, the King could open the parliamentary session in early May.

A royal decree calling for an election was expected to be published this week, but the government has signalled that it may not happen.

Thailand's Constitution, written by the military government that claimed power after a coup in 2014, dictates that the election must be held by May 9.

On New Year's Day, the Bureau of the Royal Household said the coronation ceremony of King Vajiralongkorn will be held on May 4 to 6.

He was proclaimed king in December 2016 after the death of his father, King Bhumibol Adulyadej, though he has not been officially crowned. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

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Tropical storm heading towards these islands

SOURCE: AFP STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Chinese healthcare company embroiled in scandal

Quanjian Group under probe over false advertising of its products, pyramid selling

Danson Cheong
China Correspondent
In Beijing

Sanitary napkins that can treat prostate problems and herbal remedies to cure cancer were among the claims that attracted millions of Chinese to healthcare product maker Quanjian Group.

But the billion-dollar Chinese company is now in trouble as the authorities are investigating the firm for false advertising and for operating a pyramid scheme, which is outlawed in China.

There is widespread anger and outrage directed at the firm after a medical news portal alleged that its herbal remedies led to the death of a four-year-old cancer patient.

State news agency Xinhua reported on Wednesday that preliminary investigations by Tianjin police indicated the firm may have committed the crimes of "pyramid selling and false advertising".

The police probe followed a separate investigation that began late last month by the municipal authorities in the city of Tianjin, where the company is based.

The municipal authorities acted after a report was published on Christmas Day by the Dingxiang Doctor news portal. It claimed that the company in 2013 told a farmer from Inner Mongolia, Mr Zhou Erli, that his daughter, Zhou Yang, did not have to take Western medicine or undergo chemotherapy for her cancer if she took Quanjian's herbal remedies.

Mr Zhou then decided to take his daughter out of the Beijing Children Hospital where she was undergoing treatment, but her condition worsened and she died two years later in 2015.

Even as the girl's condition was deteriorating, the company put out an advertisement claiming that she was healed of cancer and "given a new lease of life" after taking Quanjian's products.

The company has denied the report's claims and said it is working with investigators.

But the Dingxiang Doctor report, coming on top of other recent healthcare-related scandals, sparked widespread anger in China.

Quanjian's products have since been pulled off the shelves on

e-commerce platforms such as JD.com and Taobao.

Attention has also focused on the company's dubious sales tactics, with reports and videos emerging in the media of staff making outlandish claims.

In one undercover video by state broadcaster CCTV, sales staff were heard telling a reporter that the company's sanitary pads could cure prostate problems.

Another undercover video had staff saying the sanitary pads were hygienic and safe enough to eat, reported China Business News.

Businessman Shu Yuhui founded Quanjian in 2004 and since then it has grown into a nationwide business empire that reportedly includes about 600 hospitals, 7,000 health clubs providing controversial "fire therapy", over 800 skincare centres and a professional football club.

But since the scandal broke, the healthcare company's "fire therapy" centres, in which alcohol-soaked towels are placed on customers before the towels are set on fire, have been shut down by the authorities for breaching fire-safety regulations.

Quanjian has a market value of six billion yuan (\$1.2 billion), said state-run China Daily.

On its website, Quanjian claims to have discovered and collected over 600 "secret prescriptions" of traditional Chinese medicine which are used in products and then allegedly sold via a pyramid scheme.

Commenting on the issue in an editorial on Wednesday, the Global Times wrote that the issues raised in the Quanjian case reflected how businesses had exploited the gap between China's growing healthcare needs and a medical system unable to meet them, to make profits.

Beijing-based analyst Hu Xingdou said China's healthcare sector has grown in a way that has created a lot of "uncontrolled chaos", where high healthcare costs have caused many to turn to traditional remedies.

"There needs to be laws put in place to regulate advertising of healthcare products, and control what these companies can and cannot say," said Professor Hu.

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China's 'Jack the Ripper' executed



After evading arrest for 28 years, Gao Chengyong was found guilty last March by the Baiyin City Intermediate People's Court. He had robbed, raped and murdered 11 women and girls between 1988 and 2002. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

BEIJING • A serial killer dubbed China's "Jack the Ripper" for the way he mutilated several of his 11 female victims has been executed, three decades after the first murder, the court which sentenced him said.

The court in the north-west city of Baiyin in Gansu province, which handed him the death sentence in March last year, announced on the Twitter-like Weibo that it was carried out yesterday morning.

China's supreme court had approved the execution, it said.

Gao Chengyong, 54, robbed, raped and murdered 11 women and girls between 1988 and 2002 in Gansu and the neighbouring Inner Mongolia region.

He was found guilty in March last year by the Baiyin City Intermediate People's Court and handed death sentences for both robbery and intentional homicide, as well as lesser sentences for rape and dishonouring corpses.

Gao targeted young women wearing red and followed them home, often cutting their throats and mutilating their bodies, according to state media reports. The youngest victim was eight years old.

Some victims had their reproductive organs removed, the Beijing Youth Daily said when Gao was arrested in 2016.

"To satisfy his perverted desire to dishonour and sully corpses, many of his female victims' corpses were damaged and violated," the court said on Weibo when he was convicted.

"The motives of the defendant's crimes were despicable, his methods extremely cruel, the nature of the acts vile and the details of the crimes serious."

Police had been hunting Gao for years.

"The suspect has a sexual perversion and hates women," police said in 2004 when they linked the crimes for the first time and offered a reward of 200,000 yuan for information leading to an arrest.

"He's reclusive and unsociable, but patient," according to the police profiling at the time.

A lead in the case came when police collected and tested the DNA of one of Gao's relatives over a separate minor crime, the China Daily had reported.

Police concluded that the killer they had been hunting for 28 years was a relation, and Gao's DNA matched that of the murderer.

The original Jack the Ripper was a serial killer active in east London in the late Victorian era, who was widely believed to have murdered five women, mutilating several of them. Those killings have never been solved. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Taiwanese star baker's cross-strait expansion plan sparks controversy

SHANGHAI • A star baker from Taiwan became the focal point of a recent cross-strait dispute when his business expansion efforts on the Chinese mainland sparked the accusation that he was an advocate of "Taiwan independence".

Mr Wu Pao-chun, who won the Master Baker title in the 2010 Bakery Masters competition in Paris, sought to expand his chain of Wu Pao Chun bakeries to Shanghai.

During a trial run last month, mainland netizens called for a boycott due to his previous remarks about the mainland market.

In 2016, when asked about his plan for new branches, Mr Wu was quoted by Taiwan media as saying, "Although the mainland market has over 1.3 billion customers, the world's market has over seven billion. I won't keep my eyes only on China."

His words were applauded by pro-independence advocates and were distorted by some media as saying he would rather starve than open a branch on the mainland, sparking the mainland protest against his expansion plan.

Mr Wu later clarified that he was from "Chinese Taiwan" and supported the 1992 Consensus, the understanding Beijing and Taipei reached in 1992 that the two sides belong to one China.

Upset by the clarification, island separatists later started a protest against him. Kaohsiung's then mayor-elect, Mr Han Kuo-yu, showed up with Mr Wu on Dec 11 in front of Mr Wu's bakery in the southern port city to back him up.

"Mr Wu is just a baker who wants to develop his business for a better life, so I hope people on both sides can protect and appreciate him," he said. "I don't see any reason why the two sides cannot enjoy the deli-



Baker Wu Pao-chun became the focal point of a recent cross-strait dispute when his business expansion efforts in Shanghai sparked mainland netizens' call for a boycott due to his previous remarks about the mainland market. PHOTO: WU PAO-CHUN

cious bread together."

Taiwan is China's most sensitive issue and is claimed by Beijing as its sacred territory.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has stepped up pressure on the democratic island since Ms Tsai Ing-wen from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) became President in 2016.

Mr Xi, in his New Year address on Wednesday, said China reserves the right to use force to bring Taiwan under its control but will strive to achieve peaceful "reunification" with the self-ruled island that has a bright future under any future Chinese rule.

Mr Liu Jieyi, head of the Taiwan Work Office of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said in an interview with China Central Television on Monday that in the past year, the

mainland had taken the lead in cross-strait relations and had achieved results in curbing all forms of separatist acts aimed at "Taiwan independence".

Taiwan compatriots are strongly dissatisfied with the DPP authorities' sabotaging of cross-strait relations, and they call for improving the economy and people's livelihood on the island, he said.

"The understanding that only when cross-strait relations are good can Taiwan prosper has gained greater popularity," he said, adding that facts prove steady and sound growth of cross-strait relations is the will of the people.

As for Mr Wu, his bakery is in full swing in downtown Shanghai.

"I am a baker and... I just want to make friends through bread," he said.

CHINA DAILY/ASIA NEWS NETWORK, REUTERS



Medical news portal Dingxiang Doctor alleged that Quanjian Group's herbal remedies led to the death of a four-year-old cancer patient. PHOTO: REUTERS

CONTROLS NEEDED

There needs to be laws put in place to regulate advertising of healthcare products, and control what these companies can and cannot say.



BEIJING-BASED ANALYST HU XINGDOU

PEACE THROUGH BREAD

I am a baker and... I just want to make friends through bread.



MR WU PAO-CHUN

Members of Kerala Students Union, the student wing of India's main opposition Congress party, clashing with police outside a police station during a protest in Kochi yesterday. Hindu devotees are protesting over the entry of two women at Sabarimala temple on Wednesday. PHOTO: REUTERS



Protests paralyse Kerala after women defy temple ban

Stores shut, bus services halted as Hindu protesters take to the streets

KOCHI/NEW DELHI • Conservative Hindu groups forced India's southern state of Kerala to a standstill yesterday as they protested against the state government for allowing two women to defy a traditional ban and enter a Hindu temple. About 400 protesters, including some women, took to the streets of Kochi, the commercial capital of Kerala, in the early morning, backed by officials from Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the ideological parent of the BJP.

Many stores and other small businesses were shut after the Hindu groups called for a state-wide stoppage. Most bus services were halted and taxis were refusing to take pas-

sengers as some drivers said they feared they would be attacked. The state's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan told reporters that women, including female journalists covering the events, were the target of some attacks by protesters. Last September, India's Supreme Court ordered the lifting of the ban on women of menstruating age entering the Sabarimala hill temple, which draws millions of worshippers a year. The temple has refused to abide by the ruling and subsequent attempts by women to visit have been blocked by thousands of devotees.

In the early hours of Wednesday, two women were escorted by police into the temple through a side gate without being spotted by devotees guarding the temple.

The women offered prayers from the back of the crowd, from the top of a staircase where they could see the deity below without drawing the attention of the priest or other devotees, a police official familiar with the operation said. He did not wish to be identified due to the sensitivity of the issue. "Surprise was the biggest element here," the official said. Protests erupted soon afterwards. A female police constable was attacked and molested by five protesters in one of the districts near Kochi on Wednesday, while a protester was pelted with stones and killed in a southern district of the state, police said.

The Kerala state government is run by left-wing parties and has sought to allow women into the temple – a position that has drawn criticism from both of India's main political parties, the ruling BJP and the opposition Congress.

REUTERS

Trump mocks Modi over funding for Afghan library

WASHINGTON • US President Donald Trump has mocked Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi for funding a library in Afghanistan, suggesting it was of no use. Mr Trump brought up India's aid during a press appearance at a Cabinet meeting as he defended his push for the United States to invest less overseas. While stating that he got along with Mr Modi, he said the Indian leader was "constantly telling me he built a library in Afghanistan". "You know what that is? That's like five hours of what we spend," Mr Trump said. "I don't know who's using it in Afghanistan." It was unclear which project he was referring to, but India has committed US\$3 billion (S\$4 billion) in assistance to Afghanistan since US-led forces toppled the extremist Taliban regime after the Sept 11, 2001, attacks. Projects have included the reconstruction of an elite high school and scholarships to India for 1,000 Afghan students each year. Mr Modi in 2015 promised to promote programmes "empowering Afghan youth with modern education and professional skills". Bharatiya Janata Party general secretary Ram Madhav said on Twitter that India was "building lives" in Afghanistan. "Trump should know that while he is decrying every other help in (Afghanistan), India has been building not only libraries, but roads, dams, schools and even Parliament building."

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Drum Tao's Mangekyo: Rhythm Of Tribe performance last November was attended by people who are blind, deaf or physically disabled, as the troupe partnered the Japanese government for a trial "universal event" project. PHOTO: TEAMLAB

Japan boosts efforts to go barrier-free

Entertainment, transport made more disabled-friendly as it fosters more inclusive society ahead of Paralympics

Walter Sim
Japan Correspondent
In Tokyo

A musical performance is not something Ms Ritsuko Aoki would normally choose to attend, as she is deaf.

But she enjoyed a recent show by renowned musical troupe Drum Tao, being able to feel the rhythmic beats of the traditional Japanese taiko drums, paired with the melodious shinobue flute and the koto harp, through a device clipped to her hair known as Ontenna.

She had had her doubts going into the show. Ms Aoki, who is in her 40s, told The Straits Times: "My friend and I were wondering if we would actually enjoy a non-verbal entertainment show that heavily relied on sound, rhythms and beats."

These concerns were quickly dispelled, said the head human resource administrator at a chain of fitness gyms. She added, through a sign language interpreter: "Through the Ontenna device, we could distinguish the rhythms while watching the facial expressions and movements of the performers, which made for a very stirring experience."

Drum Tao, which combines music, dance, visual projections and even slight comedic relief, will perform in Singapore from March 1 to 3.

The troupe had, in November last year, partnered the Japanese government for a trial "universal event" project that came as Tokyo

pulls out the stops to foster a more inclusive society in the lead-up to the Paralympic Games, which it will host from Aug 25 to Sept 6 in 2020.

Japan has long been notorious for not being barrier-free, but this is set to change amid a rapidly ageing population and a tourism boom that saw a record 31 million visitors last year.

The government has pledged to achieve complete step-free access at all major train stations, bus terminals and airports – defined as those with more than 3,000 daily users – by March 2021, up from nearly nine in 10 currently.

Kyodo News said in a report last month that the proportion of wheelchair-friendly train cars increased 3.5 percentage points from a year earlier to 71.2 per cent as of March last year. The proportion of accessible buses, meanwhile, rose three percentage points to 56.4 per cent.

Furthermore, hotels and inns with more than 50 rooms that are being planned for construction or renovation must make at least 1 per cent of all their rooms accessible to wheelchair users. The previous standard required just one wheelchair-accessible room in each hotel.

At the Drum Tao show, titled Mangekyo: Rhythm Of Tribe, braille blocks were used to help guide the visually impaired, while the hearing impaired clipped the Ontenna sound perception device to their hair so that they could feel sounds by vibration.

Guides helped those who needed it to their seats, while more spaces



Ms Ritsuko Aoki, who is deaf, using sign language to share about her experience after watching Drum Tao's Nov 16 performance. PHOTO: MANGEKYO PR OFFICE

were also allocated to the wheelchair-bound.

Mr Hideaki Fujisawa, director of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games headquarters secretariat, told The Straits Times that Japan had the "urgent task" to re-

duce both physical and social barrier-free mindsets so people are

Japan has long been notorious for not being barrier-free, but this is set to change amid a rapidly ageing population and a tourism boom that saw a record 31 million visitors last year.

more open to approaching disabled folk who might be in need of help.

He pledged to tap the Drum Tao "universal event" trial as a model case to expand cultural, sports and entertainment options for people with disabilities, by using technology like Ontenna.

Ontenna is the brainchild of Mr Tatsuya Honda, 28, who was inspired to come up with the concept when he befriended deaf people as a volunteer in university. He now heads the Ontenna team at Japanese tech giant Fujitsu.

Mr Honda, who was listed on Forbes' 30 Under 30 list for industry, manufacturing and energy in 2017, told The Straits Times that the Ontenna device has also been tested at other events, from orchestral performances to football matches.

Of football games, he said: "Through the device, deaf people are able to sense the atmosphere of the games, including the loud cheers when a goal is scored and the deadly silence when the game goes into penalty kicks."

waltsim@sph.com.sg

N. Korean diplomat said to be missing in Italy, seeking asylum

SEOUL • A North Korean diplomat, who was until recently acting ambassador to Italy, has gone missing, a South Korean Member of Parliament said yesterday, after a South Korean newspaper reported he was seeking asylum in the West.

The diplomat, Mr Jo Song Gil, disappeared with his wife after leaving the embassy without notice in early November, according to Mr Kim Min-ki, a South Korean lawmaker who was briefed by the National Intelligence Service.

Earlier yesterday, the JoongAng Ilbo newspaper, citing a diplomatic source, said Mr Jo, 48, had applied for asylum to an unspecified Western country and was in a "safe place" with his family under the protection of Italy's government.

A senior diplomatic source in Rome said Italy's Foreign Ministry knew nothing about the reports. A second diplomatic source said the ministry had no record of Mr Jo seeking asylum in Italy.

The source added that North Korea had announced late last year that it was sending a new envoy to Rome. "It was a perfectly normal procedure," the source said.

Mr Kim told reporters he had some information about the case, but could not discuss it.

"They left the diplomatic mission and vanished," Mr Kim said, referring to Mr Jo and his family.

The JoongAng Ilbo said Mr Jo was with his wife and children. Citing an unidentified source, it said Mr Jo was known to be the son or son-in-

law of a top-ranking North Korean official.

If confirmed, Mr Jo would join a slowly growing list of senior diplomats who have sought to flee the impoverished, oppressive North under the rule of Mr Kim Jong Un.

Mr Jo took up the acting envoy post in October 2017 after Italy expelled then-ambassador Mun Jong Nam in protest over North Korea's nuclear and long-range missile tests in defiance of United Nations Security Council sanctions. Mr Jo's stint began in May 2015 and was set to expire at the end of November, lawmaker Kim said.

South Korea's presidential Blue House said earlier yesterday it had no knowledge of the matter.

WorldBriefs

Lion Air ends search for second black box

JAKARTA • Lion Air said yesterday it had ended its search for the second black box voice recorder from its Boeing 737 Max 8 jet that crashed into the Java Sea on Oct 29, killing 189 people.

The crash, the world's first of a Boeing 737 Max jet and the deadliest of 2018, killed all people on board.

Contact with flight JT610 was lost 13 minutes after it took off on Oct 29 from the capital Jakarta, heading north to the tin-mining town of Pangkal Pinang.

REUTERS

Aussie's angry rant at spider sparks call to cops

SYDNEY • An Australian man triggered an emergency police response after a noisy exchange with a spider startled a passer-by into reporting what sounded like a violent disturbance to the authorities, media reported.

A neighbour was walking past a house in the west coast city of Perth on Wednesday and heard a man repeatedly yelling "Why don't you die?" and a toddler screaming.

The neighbour then called the police emergency number, according to media reports.

REUTERS

Nasa images show faraway world in detail

LAUREL (Maryland) • Ultima Thule, an icy world 6.4 billion km from the sun, looks like a big snowman.

At a news conference on Wednesday, scientists working with Nasa's New Horizons mission released several images that the spacecraft took as it flew by on Tuesday.

The scientists now say with confidence that Ultima Thule long ago was two bodies that got stuck together, what they call a "contact binary".

It also looks pristine, almost unchanged since it formed out of a disk of dust and gas that orbited the sun more than 4.5 billion years ago. NYTIMES

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Barbie prototypes (above and below) at a workshop at the Mattel design centre in El Segundo, California. Every prototype is made by an army of experts – from sculpting the doll with state-of-the-art software and 3D printing to painting the face, styling the hair, choosing the clothing patterns. The entire design process for a new Barbie can take up to 18 months. PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Barbie is turning 60 – and still going strong

Doll remains a favourite with girls as she evolves with the times

EL SEGUNDO (United States) • She is turning 60 this year and still does not have a single wrinkle.

Blonde or brunette, slender or curvy, black or white, princess or president, Barbie is a forever favourite among young girls, even if she has caused controversy over the years.

The iconic doll has evolved to keep up with the times – check out her Twitter feed.

And despite fierce competition in the toy industry, 58 million Barbie dolls are sold each year in more than 150 countries. “In an industry where success today is three to five years, 60 years is a huge deal!” said Mr Nathan Baynard, director of global brand marketing for Barbie.

Around the world, Barbie is as well known as Coca-Cola or McDonald’s, Mr Baynard said during a recent visit to Mattel’s design studio in El Segundo, a suburb of Los Angeles.

In all, more than one billion Barbie dolls have been sold since she made her debut at the American Toy Fair in New York on March 9, 1959.

She was invented by Ms Ruth Handler, the co-founder of Mattel, who was inspired by her own children to create the doll.

“Her daughter Barbara was limited in the choices of her toys – the only ones were baby dolls,” Mr Baynard recounted. “The only role she could imagine through that play was caregiver, mother”, whereas Ms Handler’s son “could imagine being an astronaut, cowboy, pilot, surgeon”.

Barbie is, of course, a shortened

version of Barbara.

The doll was supposed to teach girls “that they had choices, that they could be anything”. “In 1959, it was a radical idea!” Mr Baynard said.

Barbie was an instant success. In the first year, 300,000 dolls were sold, he added.

At the start, Barbie’s pin-up measurements did not immediately seem all that feminist, or like they would spark criticism for decades to come. “In 1959, her body structure was exaggerated to match the aesthetics of the time and the fabric available,” said Barbie designer Carly Nuera.

Since the blonde beauty first hit store shelves, and after a torrent of complaints over what was seen as unrealistic proportions, Mattel has made many changes – introducing multiple body types and dozens of skin tones.

In 1965, four years before Neil Armstrong walked on the moon, Barbie became an astronaut. In 1968, the first black Barbie doll, a friend

named Christie, hit store shelves.

Ms Lisa McKnight, senior vice-president and global general manager for the Barbie brand, said that today, 55 per cent of the dolls sold around the world have neither blonde hair nor blue eyes.

Mattel has over 100 people working in the El Segundo design studio. Designers begin with a simple sketch. From there on, every bit of a prototype is made by an army of experts – from sculpting the doll using state-of-the-art software and 3D printing to painting the face, styling the hair, choosing fabrics and crafting the clothing patterns. The entire design process for a new Barbie can last 12 to 18 months. Then the prototype is sent from the California workshop to factories in China and Indonesia for mass production.

Barbie is not only a toy store success – she has a massive social media presence, and is something of an “influencer”, with millions of followers.

She has an actual identity: Barbie Millicent Roberts, who hails from the made-up town of Willows in the Midwest. And now, she speaks directly to girls about her life, and important current topics.

Last year, the brand launched a sweeping campaign to help young girls close the so-called “Dream Gap” – using Barbie to teach them to believe in themselves, and not to buy into sexist gender stereotypes.

So, does Barbie have it all as she hits 60, but remains forever young, single and without kids (so far)?

“The narrative of the Barbie brand is that she’s a young woman and she’s independent and pursuing careers,” Ms McKnight said.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Saudi A-G seeks death for five as Khashoggi trial opens

RIYADH • Saudi Arabia’s attorney-general has sought the death penalty for five of 11 defendants charged with the murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, as their high-profile trial opens in Riyadh.

All 11 accused were present with their lawyers at the opening hearing in the capital yesterday, according to a statement by the attorney-general carried by the official Saudi Press Agency.

The attorney-general said Saudi Arabia had twice submitted formal requests for evidence from Turkey – where Mr Khashoggi was murdered inside the kingdom’s Istanbul consulate – but had received no response.

The names of the 11 defendants have not been officially released.

Mr Khashoggi, a contributor to the Washington Post, was murdered on Oct 2 last year in what Riyadh called a “rogue” operation.

The 59-year-old Saudi insider-turned-critic was strangled and his body cut into pieces by a team of 15 Saudis sent to Istanbul for the killing, according to Turkish officials. There have been reports that his remains, which have not been found, were dissolved in acid.

The consulate and the consul-general’s residence in Istanbul were searched by the Turkish authorities in October along with several other locations.

Ankara has sought the extradition of the suspects in Saudi custody to stand trial in Turkey but its requests have been repeatedly rebuffed by Riyadh.

The United States Central Intelligence Agency has reportedly concluded that the kingdom’s de facto leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, very likely ordered Mr Khashoggi’s murder.

But in November, the Saudi attorney-general ruled out any involvement by the crown prince, whose reformist credentials abroad have been seriously tarnished by the killing.

There was no advance notice of yesterday’s court session and no footage of the proceedings was immediately shared on state-run television or media.

Saudi trials are largely closed to the media, and Ms Cinzia Bianco, a Middle East and Gulf analyst for Gulf State Analytics in London, said she did not expect a public trial in this case either.

The case is highly politicised “and much more complex than it appears just based on the evidence being shared with the public”, Ms Bianco said. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, BLOOMBERG

In November, the Saudi attorney-general ruled out any involvement by the crown prince, whose reformist credentials abroad have been seriously tarnished by the killing.

Cargo ship’s lost containers bring windfall to Dutch islanders

AMSTERDAM • Dozens of containers, with items including flat-screen television sets, have washed up on Dutch islands in the North Sea after a ship lost part of its cargo in heavy seas, bringing a windfall to local treasure hunters.

The Dutch Coast Guard said up to 270 containers had fallen off the Panamanian-flagged MSC ZOE, one of the world’s biggest container ships, in rough weather near the German island of Borkum and floated south-west towards Dutch waters.

Containers broke open on the shores of the Dutch islands of Ter-schelling and Vlieland.

Others were floating or stranded off the coasts of Ameland and Schiermonnikoog, part of a chain of islands that guard the Dutch coast.

The Coast Guard warned ships in the area to beware of floating con-

tainers. Three containers holding hazardous materials have not yet been located, the Coast Guard said.

Dutch media reported that local treasure hunters had found an array of items from containers whose contents had spilled, including light bulbs, car parts, Ikea furniture, clothing and toys.

Local media carried pictures of groups of people congregating around beached blue containers and one carrying off what appeared to be a flat-screen TV set still packed in foam. Such material is considered flotsam, and residents of the islands have a centuries-old tradition of collecting it. It was unclear if the goods were water-damaged.

The mayor of the island of Vlieland, Ms Tineke Schokker, said that the municipality does not mind scavenging. “It’s just really



A treasure hunter (above) carrying what looks like a TV set still in its packaging from a beached container. The ship MSC ZOE (right) lost up to 270 containers in a North Sea storm. PHOTOS: TWITTER PAGE OF ERIK SCHEER, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



nice of people,” she told local news agency ANP. “Processing it would cost more than the stuff is worth, and anyway with the two officers we have it would be impossible to

guard. The stuff is littered over the whole beach.”

A spokesman for the ship’s operator, MSC, had no immediate comment. REUTERS

THE STRAITS TIMES

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The Straits Times says

Singapore wins when SMEs cooperate

Competition is an act of self-interest, but cooperation might well represent the longer runway of enlightened self-interest. The spirit of the latter attitude is apparent in the decision by a group of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to work together for mutual benefit instead of competing over the same turf. They are part of an Enterprise Singapore initiative which is bringing SMEs together to succeed collectively in targeted projects. Collaboration allows for the sharing of ideas, reduces the cost of expensive, problem-solving, new technology, produces greater economies of scale and contributes to collaborators gaining competitive advantage over others. Collaboration allows SMEs to thrive locally and grow globally.

That is an urgent challenge as SMEs find themselves buffeted by US-China trade tensions, which have affected export competitiveness and reduced overseas sales for many. According to a report that cites these reasons, other causes for concern are high manpower costs, increased domestic competition, difficulty in hiring and retaining staff, and cash-flow problems. Another survey found that battling competitors was a major challenge for most smaller firms. It found that 74 per cent of respondents saw industry competition as a significant issue, while 40 per cent pointed to manpower shortages. Competition is natural to market economics, but its intensification in a small city-state without a hinterland has to be

kept within the bounds of survival.

The challenge of increased domestic competition lends itself to the kind of remedial collaboration envisaged in the Enterprise Singapore project. For pest control firms, for example, working together with other SMEs could mean coming up with solutions specific to the Singapore market, which is defined by an urban, densely populated, and high-rise building setting. Certainly, each company would look out still for its interests eventually, but it would be easier for them to realise those interests through collective endeavour where possible, instead of dissipating their resources through beggar-thy-neighbour competition. At the end of the day, SMEs must not let go of

their fundamental place in the economy. That would make it impossible for them to participate in the emerging geography of Asian success, in which SMEs play a path-finding role.

The digital economy is the new frontier. An industry study has found that getting more of South-east Asia's small businesses into the digital economy could significantly raise the region's gross domestic product. The region's digital economy is worth about US\$200 billion (\$S273 billion) today, or 7 per cent of total Asean GDP. More integration could send that figure rocketing by an additional US\$780 billion to US\$1.13 trillion over the next few years. Singapore's SMEs must survive locally to plug into the future of Asean.

SpeakingOfAsia

Time for Bangladesh to think out of the basket

Once dismissed as a basket case, Bangladesh is coming into its own, and Awami League's unprecedented polls win gives it a chance to move even faster up the development path



Ravi Velloor
Associate Editor

Whichever way you look at it Bangladesh's ruling Awami League, in power for a decade, has pulled off a magnificent election victory that now gives it a mandate to rule for an unprecedented third consecutive term of five years.

Against a ragtag coalition eviscerated by the absence in the campaign of the jailed opposition figure Khaleda Zia and her son, holed up in London to escape charges of corruption and conspiracy to murder, the courtly figure of Mr Kamal Hossain, an Independence-era figure now in his 80s, failed to muster much enthusiasm despite the anti-incumbency sentiments that you would ordinarily expect a decade-old regime to attract.

The result has been a steamroller victory for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wazed's party, whose margin was exceeded only once before in the nation's history – when Bangladesh held its first election in 1973. Even if the scale of victory itself – 288 of the 300 directly elected seats – makes the results seem dubious, and the United States and the European Union have voiced misgivings about the playing field being less than level for the opposition, there is little question that the national sentiment was overwhelmingly on her side.

Sheikh Hasina's vanquishing of Mr Hossain's coalition in some ways underscores the rejuvenation that Bangladesh is enjoying latterly. Mr Hossain's persona harks back to an era – he was a loyal deputy to Bangladesh's founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sheikh

Hasina's late father – that must now be laid to rest as the young nation prepares to turn 50.

Once known as East Pakistan, after the departing British carved up the Indian subcontinent, Bangladesh was born in bloodshed in 1971 after the Punjabi-dominated Pakistan armed forces inflicted massive atrocities on their Bengali brethren.

A flood of refugees into India prompted its then Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi, to send her troops in to intervene on behalf of the East Pakistanis.

Desperately poor and over-populated at birth, the newly independent nation was proclaimed as Bangladesh. Then US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, firmly on Cold War ally Pakistan's side, dismissed the new nation as a "basket case".

True enough, the country did much to live up to its reputation in its early years, including the assassination of its founding father in 1975 in a military-led coup. Fortunate to be abroad at the time, Sheikh Hasina escaped the slaughter her family suffered and could return to her nation only after years of exile in India.

Subsequently, there were several changes of government, elections were almost always vicious and victor's revenge was exacted every time.

Through it all, though, the country got some things right – particularly women's empowerment. A micro-credit movement – Grameen Bank founder Mohammed Yunus would later win the Nobel Peace Prize for his pioneering work in the field – helped strengthen the position of women, who were its major beneficiaries and most diligent customers. The march of the garment industry further boosted their prospects not just in the workplace but also within the home, where financially empowered women got more say over how many children they would have and, more importantly, when. Birth rates, therefore, have



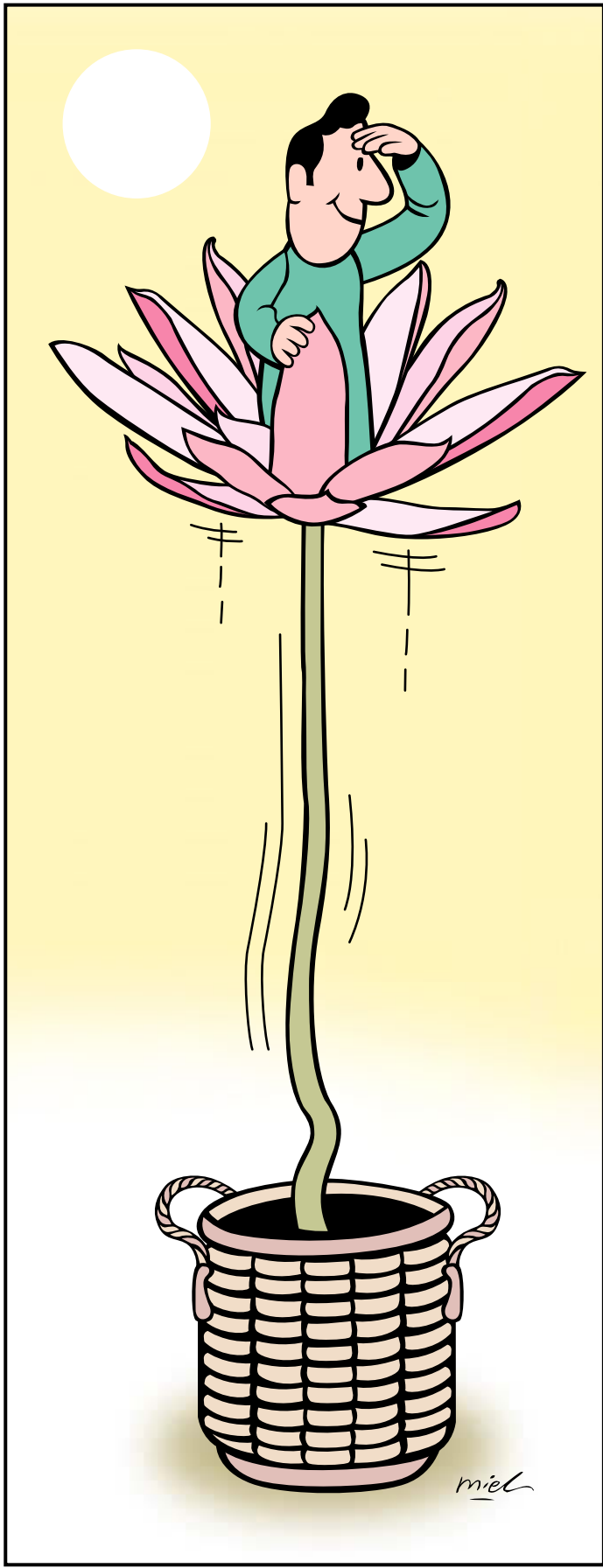
fallen off dramatically in the past three decades.

Successive governments also did not slacken on social spending and a Green Revolution helped improve farm incomes and food security. In 2010, the Bangladesh Supreme Court voided a three-decade-old constitutional amendment and restored secularism as a fundamental principle of the state, even as it retained Islam as the state religion.

PRaisEWORTHY PROGRESS

The cumulative effect of all this has been that the once-basket case has emerged as a praiseworthy nation when measured along several parameters, including some of the most remarkable progress among South Asian nations in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. It is poised to graduate from least developed country status to the list of developing countries in a few years. Indeed, it does better than dominant power India in life expectancy at birth and, latterly, rate of economic expansion.

And cruel as it may sound to



Pakistani ears, the breakaway state, which has a 90 per cent Muslim population, can stick its tongue out at it in so many ways. Under Sheikh Hasina, Bangladesh has gained international acclaim for its sympathetic and wise handling of more than 600,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, admirably put down extremist elements targeting itself and neighbouring India, and proved remarkably adept at balancing India, China, the EU and the US in its external policy.

Since 2016, when the Sheikh Hasina government signed on to China's Belt and Road Initiative, it has reached agreement on Chinese funded projects of nearly US\$10 billion (\$S13.7 billion).

It has also signed some US\$10 billion of energy contracts with Indian companies and New Delhi has given it generous lines of credit and grants totalling US\$8 billion.

This is no mean achievement given how skittish India is about Chinese activity in its immediate neighbourhood. Indeed, Dhaka in a small way has probably helped New Delhi realise that not

everything Beijing does in its neighbourhood is targeted at containing India.

CREATING NEW PATHWAYS

It is from this base that Sheikh Hasina needs to set the course for the next 50 years. This not only requires building on existing foundations but creating new pathways, and also thinking out of the box – or basket, if you will.

Domestically, the agenda ought to be clear; Bangladeshis are admired for putting their Bengali cultural identity ahead of their religious affiliations and staying the path, combined with a laser focus on balanced development, must surely be the first priority. This includes the urgent need to widen the export basket from the overwhelming reliance on ready-made garments.

Sheikh Hasina is doubtless aware that a quarter of the voters in last week's election were under the age of 28 and half of them were first-time voters. A dozen Islamist parties fielded a total of nearly 600 candidates in the recent polls. Only

one candidate was successful. If youth disenchantment were to grow, that could change in the next polls and manifest in malefic ways elsewhere.

Mr Lutfey Siddiqi, an adjunct professor at the National University of Singapore who also sits on the advisory board of its Centre for Governance, says Bangladesh must seize upon its success in building digital platforms – mirroring remarkable work in next-door India – to do better monitoring and advertising the quality of that service.

"Similar to Singapore's Committee on the Future Economy, South Korea's parliamentary committee on the fourth industrial revolution or Japan's framework of Abenomics, Bangladesh should articulate a sharper industrial vision that capitalises on its unique advantages such as demographics, and connects the fruit of 'Digital Bangladesh' specifically to youth employment," he told The Straits Times this week.

Alongside, for the world to come to its doors, it needs to work harder on good governance and ensuring that the rule of law prevails.

To take but one instance, under Awami League rule all too often the Bangladesh Chhatra League, a student body founded in 1948 by no less than founding father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, has come to adverse notice for its strong-arm instincts.

Sheikh Hasina's order to her party to not allow triumphalist victory rallies is a good first step to assuage significant sections of her populace who are convinced the polls were stolen by her Awami League and a period of repression awaits for dissenters.

Externally, the sensible thing for a nation enveloped on three sides by India is to maintain proper relations with New Delhi, and to be mindful of its concerns, even as it asserts its sovereignty and pursues its national interest globally. An easy option, which should find no objection with the regional hegemon, is to utilise its maritime access to build strong connections with Asean. A Bangladesh open to trade and investment, and determined to clamp down on extremism, will find welcome in South-east Asia.

Pakistan, linked neither by land nor directly by sea to South-east Asia, was accorded Sectoral Dialogue Partner status with Asean in 1993, and admitted to the Asean Regional Forum after it acceded to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in South-east Asia in 2004. While giving matching treatment to Bangladesh does not appear to be an Asean priority, it is not unthinkable that there will come a time when the weight of its economy, its growing commercial and tourism links, and its contributions to global peacekeeping efforts will give the country a profile that will probably spur a rethink in Jakarta.

Much though will depend on whether Sheikh Hasina has the stamina to last the course. Doubling per capita income to its current level of about US\$1,800 was no mean achievement, true, but it came off a low base. To realise the Awami League's ambition of doubling that in the next five years will need hard work.

MediShield paid only \$4.50 of Mr Seow Ban Yam's \$4,477 bill from the Singapore National Eye Centre. There are thousands more like him each year who probably face bills from public institutions which are higher than what MOH allows MediShield Life to cover.
ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG



Are MediShield Life payouts lower than subsidised fees?

Either the national health insurance claims limits are too low, or public health institutions are charging fees that are too high for those procedures. Time to square the circle.



Salma Khalik

Senior Health Correspondent

Good healthcare is not cheap. To ensure that all Singaporeans can afford the medical treatments that they need, the Government provides generous subsidies for people opting for basic medical care without frills.

Since 2015, it has added another layer of “safety” with the launch of a compulsory national health insurance – MediShield Life – that provides cradle-to-grave protection against big medical bills at subsidised government centres.

For those who still can’t afford to pay for healthcare in spite of the subsidy and insurance, there is further help in the form of MediFund, an endowment fund set up by the Government to pay for medical treatments for the poor.

With all these schemes in place, the healthcare needs of Singaporeans should be well taken care of.

Unfortunately, in practice, things do not always work out as planned.

When MediShield Life was launched, people were promised peace of mind for their big hospital subsidised bills, although there is a \$100,000 cap on claims each year.

People need to take care of the smaller bills themselves – hence they must pay a yearly deductible of \$1,500, \$2,000 or \$3,000, based on ward class and age, before insurance kicks in. They can only claim from MediShield Life after paying that sum from their own funds, usually from their Medisave.

The problem is also not with the annual insurance cap of \$100,000. It was explained that this was to keep premiums affordable. For people with such huge subsidised bills who need help, there are other sources, such as Medifund.

No, the problem lies in something less visible to patients: how much public institutions charge and what the Ministry of Health (MOH) allows MediShield Life to cover. The catch lies in what is “claimable” from MediShield Life.

MediShield Life covers 90-97 per cent of the “claimable” bill after the annual deductible has been paid by the patient. Many would take the “claimable” amount to be the subsidised rate charged to patients.

Of course, if someone covered by the basic MediShield Life opts for private care, you’d expect the person to pay more out of pocket. But in a public hospital, you’d assume that what a fully subsidised patient is charged for a procedure is what he can claim.

The problem arises when the subsidised fee turns out to be much higher than what you are allowed to claim from MediShield Life. And you realise that you have no coverage beyond the claimable amount, and must pay the rest yourself.

This was what happened to Mr Seow Ban Yam, 83, last year.

His subsidised bill at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) to unblock the flow of his tears was \$4,477.

But the Central Provident Fund, which runs MediShield Life, said only \$3,005 of that bill was claimable. The rest was above the limits set by the MOH.

Since Mr Seow is over 80 years old, he has to pay the deductible of \$3,000 himself. That left \$5 of the bill, for which MediShield Life paid 90 per cent, or \$4.50.

The problem was this: The subsidised fee for his surgery alone was \$4,271. The “claimable” amount from MediShield Life for the surgery he went through was \$2,800. This amount is stated in the MOH’s table for surgical procedures but there is no explanation of how this amount was arrived at.

The difference of \$1,471 is not claimable, so Mr Seow has to pay that himself. Mr Seow had enough Medisave funds, so he could dip into his personal Medisave account to do so.

GAP BETWEEN CLAIMABLE AMOUNT AND ACTUAL FEES

The question here is: Why are public institutions charging subsidised fees far higher than what MOH will let you claim under the national insurance scheme?

MOH sets the maximum reimbursable amount for more than 2,500 subsidised procedures. Shouldn’t these limits – set out in the table of surgical procedures – match what public institutions charge fully subsidised patients?

Yet in Mr Seow’s case, the subsidised SNEC bill was 45 per cent higher than the limits set by MOH for insurance cover and Medisave claims.

Based on the replies The Straits Times received from both MOH and SNEC, Mr Seow’s case is not unique.

Thousands of patients probably find themselves in the same boat each year, facing bills from public institutions which are higher than what MOH allows MediShield Life to cover.

How does MOH arrive at the claimable limits set out on its table? How do they stack up against what patients are actually charged at public hospitals?

Logically, one would think that MOH sets out these limits, based on what public institutions charge. Or, so that the table acts as a guide on what such hospitals should be charging for procedures.

But if that is the case, then why are some of them charging so much more than the claimable limits, knowing that the patients would

Why Mr Seow Ban Yam got only \$4.50 from MediShield Life for his subsidised bill of \$4,477

	MediShield Life claim limits (\$)	SNEC's charges (\$)	Claimable amount (\$)
Surgical operation fee for this procedure	2,800	4,271.80	2,800
Implants/consumables	7,000	100	100
Room and board	700	105	105
Total		4,476.80	3,005

MediShield Life claims	\$3,005
Deductible for over 80-year-olds	\$3,000
Insurable amount	\$5
Copayment of 10%	\$0.50
MediShield Life paid	\$4.50
What Mr Seow paid, using Medisave	\$4,472.30

*SNEC = Singapore National Eye Centre, MOH = Ministry of Health STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

Take note of insurance policy year

Do you know what your MediShield Life policy year is? Knowing, and planning your non-emergency treatments with that in mind, could save you quite a lot of money.

That is because if you need multiple procedures, and they are all held in a single MediShield Life policy year, you pay the deductible only once.

Mr Seow Ban Yam, 83, learnt that in 2017 when he needed to have cataracts removed from both eyes. The doctors said he needed to have an operation before that, to unblock the flow of his tears.

That operation was scheduled at the Singapore National Eye Centre (SNEC) for June and the cataract removal for November.

The total cost of the operations after the government subsidy was \$7,525.

What Mr Seow did not take into consideration – he did not know it as the premiums are paid directly from his Medisave account – was that his insurance

year was different from the calendar year.

It starts on Aug 1 and ends on July 31.

This meant that the first operation was done in one insurance year, and the cataract operations were done in the following insurance year.

As a result, he had to pay the \$3,000 deductible (it is \$3,000 for people who are above the age of 80) twice.

Because of the high charges at the SNEC, the bulk of his subsidised bills was above the claimable limits.

As a result, all the coverage that he received from the compulsory national health insurance for his total subsidised bills of \$7,525 was \$4.50.

If he had done the operations within the same insurance year, he would at least have been spared from paying the deductible of \$3,000 twice.

Salma Khalik

have to foot the difference from their own resources?

Neither the CPF nor MOH would say how many subsidised bills are higher than the claimable limits.

What MOH did tell The Straits Times was that for the procedure Mr Seow underwent – called dacryocystorhinostomy – “more than nine in 10 of the subsidised charges in the other institutions are within MediShield Life claim limits”. “Other institutions” would refer to public healthcare institutions other than the Singapore National Eye centre.

SNEC are being charged more than they can claim from the national health insurance scheme.

SNEC carries out more than 43,000 day surgeries a year. Not all its patients are subsidised, though a large proportion would be. So thousands of subsidised patients would likely have bills above claimable limits.

Surely people must be asking themselves why they are paying annual premiums of \$130-\$1,530 for MediShield Life cover – when their subsidised bills don’t get enough coverage.

In fact, according to SNEC, one in 20 of its subsidised patients has to pay more than \$100 in cash over and above what can be covered by MediShield Life and his or her own Medisave account.

Equally worrying is that SNEC is not the only public referral centre – the reason that MOH gave for its higher charges. There are also the heart, cancer and skin centres and the infectious diseases and neuroscience institutes.

Are many subsidised patients at all these places also getting charged more than MediShield Life will cover, and hence will have to pay a large part of their subsidised bills themselves? Bear in mind too that this would be over and above the deductible and their share of co-payment.

WHAT DOES COVERING 90 PER CENT OF BILLS REALLY MEAN?

MOH says that, in order to keep premiums affordable, MediShield Life was designed to fully cover only nine in 10 subsidised bills.

Most people took this to mean that patients who have been means tested to receive lower government subsidies might have bills that are higher than the claimable limits.

With means testing, patients in a C class ward would get a subsidy ranging from 65-80 per cent, while a B2 class patient is given 50-65 per cent subsidy. Similarly, permanent residents also get lower subsidies.

So no one would be surprised if their final subsidised bill is above the claimable amount.

But there is no means testing for day surgery, which was the procedure Mr Seow had.

For day surgeries, patients are either “private” where they can choose their consultant, or “subsidised”, usually because they had been referred to the specialist centre by a polyclinic doctor, or have the Community Health Assist Card.

For a Singaporean who is entitled to the full subsidy, beyond the deductible and the co-payment, MediShield Life should cover the entire subsidised bill for his medical treatments, up to a threshold of \$100,000 a year.

And the patient should be able to pay his share – the co-payment and deductible – using Medisave.

If the bills of more than 5 per cent of SNEC’s subsidised patients exceed the limits of reimbursement by both MediShield Life and Medisave combined, then we need to ask:

- 1) Are the public institutions like SNEC charging too much?
- 2) Is the government subsidy to these places insufficient?
- 3) Or are the claimable amounts under MediShield Life set too low and do not reflect real costs?

It has to be one of these.

The other issue is why a national referral centre should need, and be allowed, to charge substantially more than public hospitals, for a treatment that both do.

Are patients at these specialist centres subsidising the cost of research done at these places? If that is so, then it should stop. Such funding should come from other sources and not subsidised patients, who may already have a hard time paying their own bills.

It would be interesting to know, three years after the launch of MediShield Life, if it does truly fully cover nine in 10 subsidised patients as it was meant to, or if the number has been eroded over time. This is information the Government owes the public a duty to disclose.

Perhaps MOH also needs to scrutinise fees charged by the public sector and compare them to the table of surgical procedures. If there is a big gap, either the public institutions need to rein in costs; the government funding needs to be increased; or the table of claims limits needs to be aligned to the higher costs of these procedures.

Healthcare financing in the public sector for Singaporeans who opt for and fully qualify for subsidised care should go back to basics, where government subsidy and the 3Ms (Medisave, MediShield Life and Medifund) fully cover them for big medical bills.

They should not be short-changed by artificial limits set by the table of surgical procedures that does nothing to rein in rising costs in the public sector.

It would be interesting to know, three years after the launch of MediShield Life, if it does truly fully cover nine in 10 subsidised patients as it was meant to, or if the number has been eroded over time. This is information the Government owes the public a duty to disclose.

Two writers offer different views of US President Donald Trump’s political prospects this year – crumbling support, or opportunity, as named opponents come out against him

Many white evangelicals in the US believe Mr Donald Trump is God’s vessel for “delivering them from the ‘captivity’ of the Obama administration”, so there’s little the President could do that would make these white conservative evangelicals abandon him, says historian John Fea. PHOTO: REUTERS



Evangelicals may be President’s last resort

Greg Sargent

Why does President Donald Trump continue to keep the government shut down over his demand for a border wall, when large majorities oppose it? The most obvious answer is that he senses his long-term political survival depends on keeping his wall-adoring base behind him as his legal travails mount.

What is more interesting, though, is that the core of that base support may grow increasingly dependent on the white evangelical Christians who continue fervently supporting Mr Trump no matter what he says and does. And for these voters, it appears, the wall is an extraordinarily potent totem, one whose significance for them calls for better explication as we head into a protracted showdown over it.

Mr Trump on Wednesday met Democratic leaders over the shutdown and the wall. He senses just how important the wall has become as a political theatre piece in the eyes of his base. And one fascinating component of this is white evangelical support for it.

Among white evangelical Christians, support for the wall has risen nearly 10 points since Mr Trump campaigned on it. In the most recent PRRI poll, last September, a staggering 67 per cent of them favoured Mr Trump’s wall.

White evangelical Christian support for Mr Trump may perhaps prove his strongest bedrock, one important key to holding his base. Journalist Ron Brownstein recently analysed the 2018 election results and found that key elements of Mr

Trump’s blue-collar white base moved away from Republicans – with the exception of white evangelicals, who instead showed a “hardening loyalty” to the Trump-era GOP. There appears to be a schism on the wall in particular, with some groups of non-evangelical whites opposing it while evangelical whites continue to overwhelmingly support it.

Why is the wall so important to this segment of Mr Trump’s base in particular? Mr Robert Jones, the head of PRRI, told me that the wall powerfully symbolises the deeper reasons they supported Mr Trump in the first place. “For white evangelicals who see the sun setting on white Christian dominance in the country, the wall is a powerful metaphor,” said Mr Jones, who has spent many years analysing the attitudes of religious voters, and published a book about The End Of White Christian America.

Mr Jones added that this metaphor embodies a white evangelical view of the world “as a dangerous battleground” made up of “chosen insiders and threatening outsiders”, as well as an “embattled minority trope that is rooted deep within southern culture”, such as the “Lost Cause theology following the Civil War”, and in “evangelical culture generally”.

In recent weeks, there’s been renewed attention to the true nature of white evangelical Christian support for Mr Trump, and its remarkable durability in the face of revelations of his sordid personal behaviour and corruption. This has been prompted by the release of a new movie, The Trump Prophecy, which tells the tale of a

former firefighter who experienced an epiphany in 2011 that Mr Trump would be elected president.

Analysing the film, Ms Katherine Stewart, a journalist who covers the Christian right, notes that it positions Mr Trump as a modern-day King Cyrus, the 6th century BC king of Persia who freed Jews from captivity in Babylon. As Ms Stewart notes, Cyrus is the “model for a non-believer appointed by God as a vessel for the faithful”, and in the eyes of white evangelicals, Mr Trump plays that role. In this telling, Mr Trump is a saviour figure for “Christian nationalism”, so his personal failings and misconduct are beside the point. Indeed, Ms Stewart notes, his autocratic and anti-democratic conduct is a virtue, since it is being marshalled towards that end of rescuing evangelical culture from extermination.

As Ms Stewart points out, some leading evangelical figures have even talked about this in wall metaphors. One such figure, who appears in the film, has declared that “America has become a nation without walls”, and that Mr Trump will “restore the crumbling walls that separate us from cultural collapse”.

On this score, historian John Fea has noted a longtime strain in white evangelical culture of “racial and religious fear” built on anxiety over immigrants, secularisation, modernisation, and demographic change.

While white evangelicals are not a monolith, Professor Fea argues, many believe Mr Trump is God’s vessel for “delivering them from the ‘captivity’ of the Obama administration”, so there’s little Mr Trump could do that would “lead white conservative

evangelicals to abandon him”.

All this taps into a broader global trend documented in Professor Wendy Brown’s remarkable book, Walled States, Waning Sovereignty. In multiple countries, walls are becoming political totems and theatre pieces that reassure those anxious about waning national sovereignty. Walls appear deeply ahistorical in the face of the actual challenges to sovereignty mounted by the facts of 21st-century globalisation, Prof Brown writes, but their overtones of long-vanished historical times are key to what makes them reassuring.

And so, it may seem unhinged when Mr Trump tweets that: “Throughout the ages some things never get better and never change. You have Walls and you have Wheels,” but he may well be tapping into deeper impulses on the part of his most fervent supporters, which could be helping to keep that bond so tight.

All of which makes it more likely that if Special Counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation and probes by the incoming Democratic House close in around Mr Trump, these voters may end up being his most loyal backers. “Even if Trump loses support among other parts of his 2016 base, the data suggests white evangelicals may be the last loyalists standing by his side,” Mr Jones told me. “As Democrats take control of the House and as the Mueller investigation advances, white evangelicals look to be building their own wall of defence around Trump.”

Mr Trump may end up needing their wall as much as they think they need his.

WASHINGTON POST

Hold off the death notices for the Trump presidency

Janan Ganesh

In Washington, where even the metaphors are militarised, the White House is said to be under “siege”.

The word will not do. It implies outside hordes intent on entry. President Donald Trump can but wish for such a clamour. With his caretaker chief of staff, his under-manned legal team and his sheepish desertion by once-serve Republicans, the flight of people from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue is more notable than any gathering at the gates. We would not describe Orson Welles at the end of Citizen Kane, burning through friends and rattling around a house that is altogether too large for him, as besieged.

The trouble is that Democrats are too quick to see in this pitiable leakage of allies the beginning of the end of Mr Trump. Yes, he is exposed to overlapping probes into his conduct by special counsel Robert Mueller and other investigators. The economy is due a downturn. And his opponents have the House of Representatives, as well as a squad of candidates jostling to challenge him in 2020.

But therein lies what hope he has. Until now, the alternative to Mr Trump has been non-specific. Voters have been free to compare him to the ideal president of their imaginations or – that cipher invented for polling purposes – a “generic Democrat”.

This year, the alternative to Mr Trump will gain some flesh-and-blood definition, in the form of House Speaker-designate Nancy Pelosi and in the candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination. The point is not that these politicians are useless. What they are, though, is human, with attackable flaws of character and policy.

For the first time since he defeated Mrs Hillary Clinton in 2016, retiring her to a purgatory of under-attended speaking tours, Mr Trump will have someone to define himself against. Voters who do not much like him will have to decide whether they actively prefer the substitutes on offer.

The answer might be affirmative. If Ms Elizabeth Warren can escape the retrograde interest in the exact composition of her blood – a racial obsession that is un-American or all too American, I cannot decide which – she could be the photographic negative of Mr Trump: a conscientious, policy-literate leader. To that end, the senator from Massachusetts has, like former San Antonio mayor Julian Castro, set up one of those “exploratory committees” whose explorations tend to conclude that, yes, a presidential bid is in order.

There would, for the first time in over two years, be a choice: Mr Trump versus X, not Mr Trump considered in isolation. Just as a

currency can be priced only in terms of another, the popularity of a politician is meaningless except in comparison with a direct rival. To cite Mr Trump’s dismal approval rating – a standalone measure – is to reveal only so much.

He will soon have identifiable opponents to pelt with questions. If not with a wall and visa curbs, how should immigration be controlled? How much more money should be sunk into the forever wars of the Middle East and Central Asia? Universal healthcare is the future, say Democrats, but which model, at what cost, with which relative losers, compensated how?

None of which even allows for his knack of reducing an opponent with a brisk but somehow definitive insult – a “low energy” or a “crooked Hillary”. This sordid talent has been dormant while his opponent took an abstract form (globalism, liberalism, elitism) rather than a human with a face and a voice.

There are other reasons to hold off on the death notices for this presidency. A trade truce with China would calm markets and voters. If a recession does come, Mr Trump will pin it (irresponsibly) on premature rate-tightening by hard-faced Poindexters at the Federal Reserve. As for scandal, Americans knew he was a rogue when they elected him. It is not clear why formal substantiation of this truth by Mr Mueller, or anyone else, would do for him now. None of these reasons quite capture the President’s real advantage, though, which is his imminent acquisition of specific opponents.

Faced with multiple explanations for the same event, William of Occam advised us to choose the one that involves the fewest assumptions.

Commentators have mislaid his Razor since 2016. They have attributed Mr Trump’s victory to epic historical forces concerning global economics and white angst that were “always” going to tell. A simpler view is that a decisive number of swing voters just could not abide Mrs Clinton. It was the human contrast that worked for him, and he has had to do without such a foil these past two years. As of this month, no longer.

FINANCIAL TIMES

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How to repair the US-China relationship and prevent a modern Cold War

Jimmy Carter

Forty years ago, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping and I normalised diplomatic relations between the People’s Republic of China and the United States, putting an end to three decades of hostility. This led to an era distinguished by peace in East Asia and the Pacific region.

China’s spectacular economic growth, in conjunction with its continuing integration with the much larger US economy, has enabled the two countries to become engines of global prosperity. Scientific and cultural exchanges have blossomed, and the US has since become the top foreign destination for Chinese scholars and tourists. The 40th anniversary of this relationship is a testament to the ability of

countries with different histories, cultures and political systems to work together for the greater good. Yet, today, this critical relationship is in jeopardy.

I hear Chinese elites claiming that Americans are conducting an “evil conspiracy” to destabilise China. I hear prominent Americans, disappointed that China has not become a democracy, claiming that China poses a threat to the American way of life. US government reports declare that China is dedicated to challenging US supremacy, and that it is planning to drive the US out of Asia and reduce its influence in other countries around the world.

If top government officials embrace these dangerous notions, a modern Cold War between our two nations is not inconceivable. At this sensitive moment, misperceptions, miscalculations

and failure to follow carefully defined rules of engagement in areas such as the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea could escalate into military conflict, creating a worldwide catastrophe.

The US imposition of tariffs on US\$200 billion (S\$273 billion) worth of Chinese goods, and China’s retaliatory tariffs, contribute to the deteriorating ties, hurting both countries.

The 90-day pause in further escalation of tariffs, agreed to at the Group of 20 summit in Argentina, offers the possibility of reaching a permanent agreement on US-China trade. What can we do to build on this progress, and to repair the US-China relationship?

First, the US’ long-standing complaints – about trade imbalances, intellectual property theft, forced technology transfers and unfair barriers to US

investments and business operations in China – must be addressed quickly and effectively.

Neither country should use “national security” as an excuse to obstruct the other’s legitimate commercial activities. China needs competition for its economy to innovate and grow; pursuing a fair and reciprocal relationship is the only way for both countries to remain economically strong.

Second, Americans must acknowledge that, just as China has no right to interfere in US affairs, we have no inherent right to dictate to China how to govern its people or choose its leaders. Though even countries with the closest of relationships may critique each other at times, such engagements should never become directives or edicts; they should rather serve as a two-way street of open dialogue.

China’s achievements in

sustaining economic growth, alleviating abject poverty and providing developmental assistance to other countries need to be celebrated. At the same time, we cannot ignore its deficiencies in Internet censorship, policies toward minorities and religious restrictions – which should be recorded and criticised.

This balanced approach is key to ensuring that the US and China continue to work together towards solving some of the most intractable global problems. Despite current tensions on other issues, Chinese support has been essential in our ongoing efforts to denuclearise the Korean Peninsula. Beijing also could offer crucial help in post-conflict reconstruction in the Middle East and Africa, countering terrorism and extremism, and mediating other international disputes.

The US should return to the Paris climate accord and work with China on environmental and climate-change issues, as the epic struggle against global warming requires active participation from both nations.

But I believe the easiest route to bilateral cooperation lies in Africa. Both countries are already heavily involved there in fighting disease,

building infrastructure and keeping peace – sometimes cooperatively. Yet each nation has accused the other of economic exploitation or political manipulation. Africans – like billions of other people around the world – do not want to be forced to choose a side. Instead, they welcome the synergy that comes from pooling resources, sharing expertise and designing complementary aid programmes. By working together with Africans, the US and China would also be helping themselves to overcome distrust and rebuild this vital relationship.

In 1979, Deng Xiaoping and I knew we were advancing the cause of peace. While today’s leaders face a different world, the cause of peace remains just as important. Leaders must bring new vision, courage and ingenuity to new challenges and opportunities, but I believe they also must accept our conviction that the US and China need to build their futures together, for themselves and for humanity at large.

WASHINGTON POST

• Jimmy Carter, the 39th president of the United States, is founder of the non-profit Carter Centre.

Shinzo Abe’s harpoon hits the wrong target

Leaving the International Whaling Commission in effect means the Japanese PM wants to pick and choose the country’s commitment to multilateralism

Philip Stephens

Japan has fired a harpoon at the rules-based global order. In an announcement slipped out while its friends and allies in the West were celebrating Christmas, the Shinzo Abe government said it is quitting the International Whaling Commission (IWC). Japan will resume commercial whaling this year, joining Norway and Iceland in defying the global norms designed to safeguard stocks of the extraordinary ocean mammal.

The decision has provoked expected protests from the conservation groups and governments whose efforts during the second half of the 20th century halted what had seemed an inexorable hunt to extinction. But in the era of US President Donald Trump’s America First foreign policy, of rising nationalism across the world, of trade wars and of advancing authoritarianism, Mr Abe doubtless hopes the water will soon close over his snub to one of the many multilateral

organisations supporting the liberal international order.

Some in Tokyo think the move might actually reduce international controversy about Japan’s pro-whaling stance. After all, its fleet has long exploited an IWC loophole to carry out “research” hunts in the Antarctic. Now the boats will operate only in Japanese waters. And who, beyond a few conservationists, will worry about a handful of Japanese fishing boats when the Russian navy is attacking Ukrainian vessels sailing in international waters?

At a glance, the Japanese Prime Minister may be on to something. The fate of the IWC scarcely fits on the same seismic scale as that of the open global trading system. Anyone who questions the stakes should recall that Mr Trump went to the UN last autumn to celebrate selfish nationalism and denounce “globalism” in all its guises.

You could look at Mr Abe’s decision through the other end of the telescope. Japan has been among the most faithful supporters of the global order, steadfast in its attachment to the international rule of law. Tokyo’s new readiness to walk out of the IWC surely signals the system is now beyond repair?

Explaining the decision, the government’s Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said that it had become impossible within the commission “to seek the coexistence of states with different views”. Other members of the IWC

had refused to accept Tokyo’s position that the moratorium on whaling that has been in place since 1986 had seen numbers rise to a level sufficient to allow the safe resumption of commercial hunting.

In its essence, there is no difference in this exposition from the position adopted by Mr Trump on climate change. Stripping out the hyperbole of his pronouncements, the US President argues that Washington takes one view of global warming and members of the Paris climate agreement another. So, to Mr Trump’s mind, the US has made the reasonable decision to withdraw.

The US administration deploys much the same case when it threatens to leave the World Trade Organisation or disavows the international agreement to monitor Iran’s nuclear programme.

Like Mr Trump, Mr Abe is, in effect, saying that he wants multilateralism a la carte. Of course, Japan is fully signed up to the rules-based system – except, that is, where a particular norm collides with its national preferences. Surely it cannot have gone unnoticed in Tokyo that an increasingly assertive China adopts just this stance when it refuses to abide by international rulings on its territorial disputes with neighbours in the South China Sea?

Travel further along the road of pick and choose and the entire system soon collapses. The rules-based system works for

everyone only if everyone accepts that the benefits overall outweigh the inconvenience of occasional clashes between international norms and national preferences. The purpose of sharing notional sovereignty is to increase the real capacity to act.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel put it well in her New Year message. National and international interests, she said, become indivisible in the face of global problems. Dr Merkel singled out climate change, international terrorism and unmanaged migration as vital areas of international cooperation. She might well have added to this list preserving the ecosystems of our oceans. The pity is that Dr Merkel’s present legacy is that of a leader who thus far has been more eloquent in the advocacy of such an approach than diligent in its application.

Japan has no need to resume commercial whaling. Whale meat, once an important source of protein, ceased long ago to play any significant role in the nation’s diet. The industry employs relatively few people, concentrated in a small number of coastal villages. But, like Mr Trump, Mr Abe is appealing to his electoral “base”. The villages are concentrated in parliamentary districts mostly controlled by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. Whaling is part of Japan’s nationalist folklore. The Prime Minister has chosen to make it an emblem of national sovereignty.

He has done himself, and Japan, a disservice. The most powerful nations will always hedge their commitments to multilateralism. Something resembling the present system can survive only with the solid backing of the next tier – Germany and Japan prominent among them. Mr Abe might have pressed the point during Japan’s presidency this year of the Group of 20 group of leading nations. The harpoon, though, has wounded his credibility. FINANCIAL TIMES

Why smart people may be more likely to fall for fake news

Faye Flam

One might suspect scientists of belabouring the obvious with the recent study called Belief In Fake News Is Associated With Delusional, Dogmatism, Religious Fundamentalism, And Reduced Analytic Thinking.

The conclusion that some people are more gullible than others is the understanding in popular culture – but in the scientific world it’s pitted against another widely believed paradigm, shaped by several counter-intuitive studies that indicate we’re all equally biased, irrational and likely to fall for propaganda, sales pitches and general nonsense.

Experts have told us that consistent irrationality is a universal human trait. A Washington Post columnist last month reminded us of Professor Jonathan Haidt’s “cogent and persuasive account” of how bad humans are at evidence-based reasoning. The article also cites the classic 2013 book Thinking, Fast And Slow to argue that we’re ruled more by tribes, affiliations and instincts than by evidence.

But isn’t it possible this applies to some people more than others? Is it reasonable to believe that we are all equally bad at reasoning? Luckily, some scientists seem to think that they are capable of evidence-based reasoning, and they have investigated the questions.

Canadian psychologist Gordon Pennycook, an author on the delusional paper and a leader in the camp promoting the idea that some are more gullible than others, concedes that it is a little weird that one can get published demonstrating that “smarter people are better at not believing stupid things”.

That’s essentially the conclusion in a newer paper not yet officially published, Rethinking The Link Between Cognitive Sophistication And Identity-Protective Bias In Political Belief Formation, which he co-wrote with Mr Ben Tappin and Associate Professor David Rand.

They question the idea that smarter people are, if anything, more likely to believe false things, because their mental agility helps them rationalise. It’s a school of thought that became popular partly because it is a bit loopy, and partly because views that lump us all together have a ring of political correctness.

The roots of it trace back, in part, to Yale researcher Dan Kahan, who has done some widely respected experiments showing that peoples’ views on technical subjects such as climate change and nuclear power depended almost entirely on political affiliation.

I wrote about Professor Kahan’s work, citing a study that “showed that the better people are at maths and reasoning, the more likely they are to align their views with ideology, even if those views included creationism or other unscientific stances”.

Professor Pennycook said he agrees with Prof Kahan on this to an extent; it’s not incompatible with his findings, but it applies only in special cases, such as climate change, where the subject matter is technical and complex. On television, complete charlatans who know the right buzzwords can sound as erudite to the lay public as the world’s true experts would.

But Prof Pennycook and his colleagues questioned whether this counter-intuitive finding applied more generally. To put it to the test, they showed subjects a mix of fake and real news stories and asked them to rate their plausibility. They found some people were bad at this and some were good, and that the best predictor of news discernment was something called the Cognitive Reflection Test.

Low scores are correlated with religious dogmatism, superstition and belief in conspiracy theories as well as a type of fake aphorism that Prof Pennycook called “pseudoprofound”.

Understanding who believes fake news and why touches on the very foundations of American democracy. The view that we’re all equally clueless plays into the post-truth rabbit hole dug by the Trump campaign and administration. Why listen to experts who’ve spent a lifetime studying something if they, like all of us, deserve an F in rationality? Why bother trying to think anything through?

Well, maybe because the truth is out there. In the book Network Propaganda, a group of Harvard researchers analyse thousands of social media posts to demonstrate the influence of false and misleading information in American politics. They also dispel the myth that partisans on the left and right are equally influenced by falsehoods. The data, they say, shows the problem is concentrated on the right.

This is not to say that people who are good at picking out fake news and score well on the Cognitive Reflection Test are smarter than other people in other ways. As Mr Michael Shermer argued long ago in his classic Why People Believe Weird Things, very creative people – even famous scientists – can be subject to delusions and occasionally believe in astrology or conspiracy theories.

Prof Pennycook agreed this is not just a cognitive issue but could encompass elements of personality and mental health. Just as Mr Shermer showed there are creative delusional people, there also are those smart but narcissistic types – the people who insist all climate scientists are idiots, for example. WASHINGTON POST

A minke whale being lifted from a ship at Kushiro port in Hokkaido in 2017. Japan will resume commercial whaling this year, joining Norway and Iceland in defying the global norms designed to safeguard stocks of the extraordinary ocean mammal. PHOTO: EPA-EFE



A more perfect union: The free-market welfare state

Brink Lindsey

How do we unwind today’s extreme political polarisation before it tears American democracy apart? It’s a challenging riddle, as many diverse factors have contributed to polarisation’s rise. Inequality, demographic change, geographic sorting, the Internet and social media, the end of the Cold War – all have played a part in splitting the US electorate into two hostile and mutually uncomprehending tribes. Some of these factors are irreversible, and others look stubbornly resistant to reform.

But there is one major driver of polarisation that is directly under the control of politicians, if only they would realise it. One of the biggest fault lines in American politics, the long-running ideological dispute over the proper size of government, is based on a false dichotomy. It is time to leave that sterile debate behind.

The traditional axis of conflict is “pro-government” on the left and “pro-market” on the right. But to revive the flagging economic dynamism of the United States and ensure that it translates into broadly shared prosperity, we must make bold moves in both

directions simultaneously. We need both greater reliance on market competition and expanded, more robust, and better-crafted social insurance.

We need more government activism to enhance opportunity, as well as less corrupt and more law-like governance. To see these needs and how best to answer them, we have to fashion a new ideological lens: one that sees government and market not as either-or antagonists, but as necessary complements.

At the Niskanen Centre, a Washington think-tank founded in 2015, we are working to develop and articulate this new intellectual synthesis. Our hybrid policy vision draws insights from both the left and the right, combining liberal awareness of the need for activist government with libertarian recognition of the limits and pitfalls of government action. The resulting policy model is what we call the free-market welfare state.

Free markets are the irreplaceable engine of innovation and rising living standards. But they are not spontaneous and self-executing; they require well-crafted regulations. Good regulations are what make Adam Smith’s “invisible hand” possible: they align the private interest of profit seeking with the public interest

of wealth creation.

That is why we support a carbon tax and higher capital requirements for financial institutions: profiting by imposing costs on others is a corruption of capitalism, not the real thing. And when regulations are twisted by insiders to benefit them at the expense of everyone else, that’s a corruption of democracy.

Which is why we favour scaling back protections for copyrights and patents and loosening occupational licensing and rules on new housing.

Free markets make us enormously richer over time. But as economist Joseph Schumpeter observed, they destroy at the same time they create, subjecting some people to short-term disruptions and dislocations. Social insurance programmes are the chief mechanisms that societies have developed for minimising these hazards of economic life in a way that doesn’t sacrifice the dynamism of the market.

Social insurance is also the main reason for contemporary “big government”: according to a line popularised by Paul Krugman, modern government is basically an insurance company with an army.

While the welfare state needs a serious makeover to root out perverse incentives and to restore fiscal sustainability, the point of reform is to make social insurance work better, not roll it back.

What the critics of these expensive “entitlements” miss is that social insurance doesn’t just provide security for individual beneficiaries. Crucially, it also secures the capitalist system.

By shielding people from the downside risks inherent in a market economy, social insurance

fortifies capitalism against political backlash. When social protection is lacking, protectionism too often fills the vacuum, as the reasonable demand for economic security is translated into popular support for trade barriers, inflexible labour regulations, industry bailouts as well as precautionary impediments to new technologies.

This is why, even according to indexes produced by pro-market organisations such as the Heritage Foundation and Fraser Institute, the freest economies generally feature big welfare states.

Unfortunately, both major parties in the US remain blind to the depolarising logic of the free-market welfare state. Instead, they seem intent on racing off to the dysfunctional extremes of both the left and right. Over the past two years, Republicans have staged a major tax giveaway for the rich while trying to gut social spending.

Democrats, lured by the siren song of democratic socialism, are putting forward such genuinely bad ideas as free college, job guarantees, and co-determination rules for corporate boards.

It doesn’t have to be this way. There is a path forward that can bring Americans together across ideological battle lines, united in pursuit of greater prosperity and opportunity for all. And the first step onto this path is recognising that it exists. WASHINGTON POST

• Brink Lindsey is vice-president for policy at the Niskanen Centre. This article was adapted from the essay The Centre Can Hold: Public Policy For An Age Of Extremes by Lindsey, Steven Teles, Will Wilkinson and Samuel Hammond.

Understanding who believes fake news and why touches on the very foundations of American democracy. The view that we’re all equally clueless plays into the post-truth rabbit hole dug by the Trump campaign and administration.

BIG PICTURE



WEATHER

Windy, with passing showers in the afternoon.
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24-hr PSI as of 5pm yesterday: 54 to 61 (Moderate)



PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Don't monkey with my count

A zoo keeper has the unenviable task of tallying the total number of squirrel monkeys at the London Zoo in central London during the zoo's annual stock take yesterday.

He uses food to keep the mischievous and highly active creatures sufficiently occupied to make the count.

And they are not even the hardest animals to keep track of. Things get even more complicated with invertebrates such as spiders and jellyfish.

The London Zoo is the world's oldest scientific zoo, first opening to the public in 1847. It now welcomes more than a million visitors a year.

The compulsory annual count is required as part of the zoo's licence.

The Mail Online reported that at last count, there were more than 17,000 animals living at the site, comprising more than 750 species, and all have to be accounted for again this year by the 70-strong team – a process that usually takes about a week.

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C2



The Singapore Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management said in its report that the lower overall PMI was due to slower growth in new orders and new exports, factory output, inventory and employment level. ST FILE PHOTO

Factory growth cools, PMI down 0.4 point in December

Electronics sector loses further pace amid concerns over US-China trade ties

Seow Bei Yi
Business Correspondent

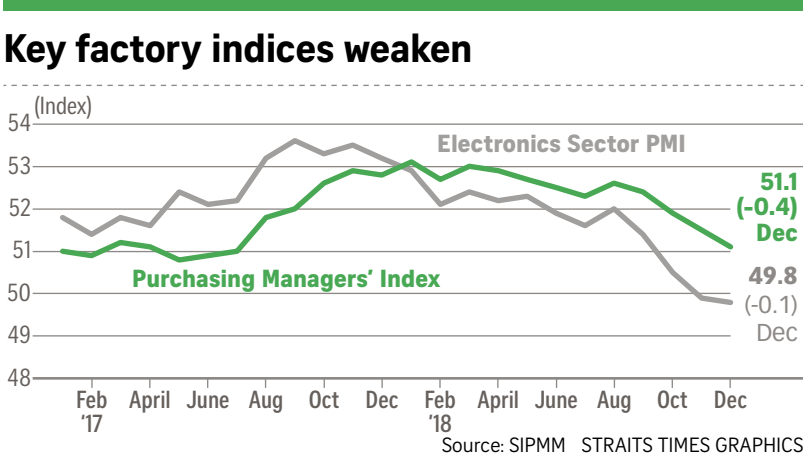
Singapore's factory growth slowed again last month, with the key electronics sector contracting further amid a weakening of the outlook for the sector globally and the fallout from the trade dispute between the United States and China.

The overall Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), dipped 0.4 point in December, reaching 51.1. A reading above 50 indicates growth.

The electronics sector, which marked its first contraction after 27 consecutive months of growth in November, dipped 0.1 point to 49.8 last month, the Singapore Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management (SIPMM) said yesterday.

The latest set of readings "did not come as much of a surprise as the regional manufacturing PMIs released earlier were also telegraphing weakness", said OCBC Bank's head of treasury research and strategy Selena Ling.

China's official manufacturing PMI, released on Monday, sank into contraction territory for the first



time since July 2016, while the Caixin manufacturing PMI released on Wednesday also contracted to 49.7, its lowest since May 2017.

South Korea, Taiwan and Malaysia also saw their manufacturing PMIs in contraction territory.

While Singapore's manufacturing PMI in December was still in expansion – for the 28th consecutive month – Ms Ling said: "Given the broad macro backdrop of tepid global growth prospects and slowing global demand for electronics, the likely trajectory is for the manufacturing PMI to continue to lose altitude in the coming months."

The current reading is likely due to non-electronics providing a buffer to weakness in the electronics sector, and probably due to the bio-

The latest set of readings "did not come as much of a surprise as the regional manufacturing PMIs released earlier were also telegraphing weakness", said OCBC Bank's head of treasury research and strategy Selena Ling.

medical sector, she added.

The SIPMM said in its report yesterday that the lower overall PMI was due to slower growth in new orders and new exports, factory out-

put, inventory, as well as employment level. It is the lowest recorded reading since July last year.

The indexes of finished goods, imports, input prices and supplier deliveries also expanded at a lower rate. The order backlog index continued to contract for a third month.

SIPMM added that the latest reading for electronics was attributed to a first-time contraction in factory output, as well as slower rates of expansion in new orders, new exports, inventory and employment.

Finished goods, input prices and supplier deliveries expanded at lower rates, while the index of order backlog continued to contract for the eighth consecutive month.

UOB senior economist Alvin Liew said the weaker PMI is likely related to a slowdown on China's growth and demand for Singapore's goods and services that are tied to it.

Although the recent fourth-quarter Gross Domestic Product numbers showed a "rebound in manufacturing activity in Singapore, looking forward, we are of the view that things will start to slow down".

"Perhaps the slight bump upwards in (manufacturing) numbers that we saw in the fourth quarter can be attributed to a front-loading of goods but once that is over, there will probably be uncertainty in how trade negotiations between the US and China will go," Mr Liew said.

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Deloitte's wish list for Budget: Sugar tax, green incentives

A tax regime friendly to start-ups, personal tax breaks also included

A sugar tax, incentives for green investment and a tax regime friendlier to start-ups are among Deloitte Singapore's Budget recommendations.

It noted yesterday that a sugar tax on drinks manufacturers is a possibility given that the Ministry of Health is mulling possible measures to tackle sweetened beverages and combat diabetes.

The revenue collected could be channelled to subsidising healthier food options, it added.

Deloitte also suggested measures to incentivise green investment in the light of the carbon-tax regime to be implemented this year.

Enhanced capital allowances of 200 per cent could be granted for the cost of energy-efficient and energy-saving equipment, including electric-vehicle charging infrastructure, up from 100 per cent now.

Similar allowances could also be granted on the acquisition of electric buses to encourage their adoption in the private transport market.

Priority could also be given to research and development (R&D) projects that tackle environmental issues by lowering or removing the \$15 million minimum threshold for

It noted yesterday that a sugar tax on drinks manufacturers is a possibility given that the Ministry of Health is mulling possible measures to tackle sweetened beverages and combat diabetes. The revenue collected could be channelled to subsidising healthier food options, it added.

the existing R&D Pre-claim Evaluation scheme.

The Government could consider exempting a portion of the income earned by qualified staff as a way of encouraging R&D more broadly and attracting quality researchers, added Deloitte.

Other suggestions aim to encourage start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Last year's Budget reduced benefits under the partial tax exemption and start-up tax exemption schemes, "perhaps in recognition that the intended recipients of the schemes – start-up companies and SMEs – may not have sufficient taxable profits to fully enjoy the tax ex-

emption", noted Deloitte.

Start-ups in particular tend to suffer losses in their first few years.

Though the current tax regime allows such losses to be carried forward indefinitely, this is done at the nominal value, which erodes over time. As an alternative, Deloitte recommends preserving the real value of tax losses by indexing them, perhaps to the consumer price index or an appropriate yield based on Singapore government bonds.

"A key benefit of this recommendation to businesses would be an increase in the projected after-tax returns on their investment," it said.

"This is an important metric for start-ups looking to attract investors, since investing in such businesses is typically a long-term, multi-stage affair."

Its recommendations on personal income tax include childcare or infant-care relief for both working parents, recalibrating earned income relief to be in line with current income levels and cost of living, and providing tax relief for individuals who pay MediShield Life premiums for elderly parents and dependent children.



Cavenagh Gardens comprises three blocks of 172 apartments, spanning 128,255 sq ft with a gross plot ratio of 2.1. PHOTO: JLL

Cavenagh Gardens to sell en bloc again, no change to \$480m reserve price

Cavenagh Gardens is the latest development hoping for another chance to sell en bloc, but the owners are not budging from their initial reserve price of \$480 million.

The project comprises three blocks of 172 apartments, spanning 128,255 sq ft with a gross plot ratio of 2.1.

Marketing agent JLL said the site could be redeveloped to yield 400 apartments of about 740 sq ft each.

As it is within the central area, revised URA planning guidelines on the maximum size of developments outside the central area do not apply.

The project is 600m from The Centrepoint and 800m from Plaza Singapura. Anglo-Chinese School (Junior) and St Margaret's Primary School are also in the area.

The reserve price translates to a

land rate of \$1,695 per square foot per plot ratio (psf ppr) and includes an estimated premium of \$18.4 million to buy about 11,800 sq ft of state land.

It would be \$1,541 psf ppr after factoring in the 10 per cent bonus gross floor area (GFA).

No development charge is payable for the site, even after including the additional 10 per cent bonus GFA.

JLL said in-principle approval was granted by the Singapore Land Authority last February for amalgamating the state land with the site. While this has expired, JLL says a developer is very likely to get approval as the land is located between the site and the CTE (Central Expressway).

The tender closes at 3pm on Jan 31.

Lenders are thriving amid bitcoin's bust

PORTLAND • As a growing number of crypto-currency ventures struggle for funding, cut staff or shut down, all is well in one small corner of the industry: lending.

Creditors focusing on the crypto arena say they are finding strong demand from borrowers who do not want to sell their virtual coins at depressed prices, as well as from big investors eager to borrow coins for short selling.

It is putting lenders on both sides of bitcoin's bust: Helping believers pay their bills while awaiting a rebound, and also enabling bets by people who think the drop has further to go.

BlockFi says its revenues and customer base have grown ten-fold since last June, when Mr Michael Novogratz's Galaxy Digital Ventures invested US\$52.5 million (S\$71.7 million).

Aave, which owns online crypto-lending marketplace ETHlend, just opened an office in London, plans to enter the US soon and is nearing profitability. And Salt Lending,

which already employs 80 people, said it is hiring more every month as its revenue ticks higher.

Most lenders in the crypto industry set up shop in 2017, initially offering enthusiasts a way to borrow cash without having to sell down their stockpiles of bitcoin or other crypto assets they believed would soar even higher.

But when prices crashed last year, lenders pivoted into new roles and continued to flourish. The lending niche, it seems, may fare even better in bad times than good.

"The bear market has certainly helped – at least has fuelled the growth," said Mr Michael Moro, chief executive of Genesis Capital.

Genesis, which launched in March to let institutional investors borrow virtual coins by depositing US dollars, has already issued US\$700 million of loans, Mr Moro said. It has about US\$140 million in loans outstanding with an average duration of six weeks, he said.

Genesis plans to more than double its staff in the coming year, and



Creditors focusing on the crypto arena say they are finding strong demand from borrowers who do not want to sell their virtual coins at depressed prices, as well as from big investors eager to borrow coins for short selling. PHOTO: BLOOMBERG

Bitcoin has slumped more than 70 per cent since the start of last year.

growing in regions such as Asia.

Mr Moro said: "We've certainly proven that there is market demand, that there's product fit and that it's time to invest even more in this side of the business."

The company typically requires customers to deposit about US\$1.2 million in fiat to take out US\$1 million of crypto. It charges an annual rate of between 10 per cent and 12 per cent to borrow bitcoin.

Bitcoin has slumped more than 70 per cent since the start of last year. Firms that accept the crypto unit or its competitors as collateral for cash loans usually demand much larger buffers to ensure they are not hit by falling prices. New York-based BlockFi requires customers to deposit US\$10,000 of digi-

tal coins to take out US\$5,000 in fiat, said chief executive Zac Prince.

When collateral drops in value, customers face margin calls, often starting with a warning that their holdings may be sold off soon.

At BlockFi, margin calls are triggered if the price of the crypto collateral falls by 35 to 60 per cent from the time the loan was granted. About 20 per cent of the start-ups' loans faced margin calls last year, Mr Prince said. Many more borrowers added collateral when warned.

"We've never had a loss of principal," Mr Prince said. "It's a low-risk type of lending, assuming you are able to manage that liquidity and track the volatility." The company's interest rates start at 7.9 per cent.

BlockFi is, in fact, planning to offer more credit products, including a bitcoin interest-bearing savings account and a loyalty card earning crypto. ETHlend is working to provide its technology to other lenders in Switzerland and Australia, so they can also accept crypto collateral.

"Everything flies in the bull market, but true magic happens when it does well in a bear market," said Aave CEO Stani Kulechov. "The crypto-backed lending model is one of the rarest." BLOOMBERG

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A Nepali-made robot waiter picking up food from the kitchen for customers at a Kathmandu restaurant. While technological advances in automation are starting to handle thousands of routine tasks and will eliminate many low-skill jobs, they are also creating opportunities for different, more productive and more creative jobs, says the report. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Forget about repeating strong 2018 US job gains, say economists

WASHINGTON • As the United States wraps up a year of surprisingly strong job growth, such gains are unlikely to repeat in the next 12 months with economic headwinds intensifying for the country and rest of the world.

The final report for 2018 is forecast to show employers added 180,000 jobs in December to cap a 2.45 million annual increase – the most since 2015 – but the monthly estimate is the lowest median projection since last January.

Economists surveyed by Bloomberg expect that to slow this year to an average monthly pace of 156,000, for a 1.87 million total followed by 1.44 million in 2020, when US President Donald Trump is up for re-election.

Other key labour measures are not expected to improve far beyond current levels by the year end. Economists project the jobless rate held in December at 3.7 per cent, the lowest since 1969, and will edge down to 3.5 per cent at the end of this year. Wage gains in December are estimated to ease to 3 per cent year on year from a post-recession high of 3.1 per cent, before a modest re-acceleration during the year.

The prospect of less robust job growth is the latest in a series of risks stacking up for the world's largest economy, even as it heads for its longest expansion on record. It comes alongside warning signs from housing to manufacturing, and projected weakening in both US and global growth this year. A waning boost from Mr Trump's tax cuts and government spending will add to the challenges for policymakers.

"The economy accelerated in 2018 and employment with it for a pretty simple and obvious reason: We had a pretty big fiscal stimulus," said Mr Lewis Alexander, chief US economist at Nomura Securities International, Inc in New York.

"The boost to growth from fiscal policy is not sustainable," he said, adding that he expects slowing of both the economic expansion and employment growth.

Barclays sees payroll growth slowing from an average pace of around 200,000 last year to about 160,000 a month this year.

"Our outlook for slower growth in activity in 2019 relative to last year, on account of a smaller impulse from fiscal stimulus, leads us to expect less employment growth this year," Barclays' chief US economist Michael Gapen said in a note.

The jobs report for November showed a payrolls increase of 155,000, a tally that missed all estimates in Bloomberg's survey calling for a gain of 198,000. The same report revised the October reading down to 237,000 from 250,000.

Maintaining strength in hiring may depend on continued contributions in key sectors such as manufacturing, which even before the December figures had added more jobs than any year since 1997. Friday's Labour Department report is forecast to show factory jobs rose by 20,000, which would bring the full-year increase to 269,000.

Elsewhere in the tallies for goods-producing sectors, mining and natural resources, jobs are within reach of their best gain since 2011, and construction is holding up. For private services jobs, more than half of the 1.68 million hires already on the books for 2018 have been in two categories: education and health services and professional and business services.

Federal Reserve policymakers have stayed sanguine on the labour market, with chairman Jerome Powell noting that increasing tightness should help keep inflation around their 2 per cent objective. Officials at their final 2018 meeting kept their end-2019 jobless rate forecast at 3.5 per cent.

But as downbeat reports stack up, pressure increases on the Federal Reserve to signal a pause on rates. Policymakers have said they intend to slow the pace of hikes this year. As they raised rates in December for a fourth time in 2018, they pencilled in just two moves for 2019, the median projection of governors and district presidents shows.

That is still more than many investors anticipate, with rate futures pointing to no moves in 2019 and a potential rate cut next year.

"A substantial surprise in the jobs number, either higher or lower, would likely elicit a significant market reaction," Citigroup Inc economist Veronica Clark wrote in a report.

"An upside surprise could increase market expectations for rate hikes in 2019, while a downside surprise could lead markets to price a higher probability that exceptional US growth is not immune from declining equity prices and slowing global growth."

BLOOMBERG

Other key labour measures are not expected to improve far beyond current levels by the year end. Economists project the jobless rate held in December at 3.7 per cent, the lowest since 1969, and will edge down to 3.5 per cent at the end of 2019. Wage gains in December are estimated to ease to 3 per cent year-on-year from a post-recession high of 3.1 per cent, before a modest re-acceleration during the year.

Robots aren't yet killing off all jobs, says World Bank

Its report stresses that nature of work in future will evolve

BRUSSELS • The rise of automation has so far had a negligible impact on jobs at a global scale, the World Bank chief economist said, despite common gloomy predictions that humans are set to be replaced by machines.

While advanced economies have shed industrial jobs over the last two decades, the rise of the same sector in East Asia has more than compensated for the loss, according to an annual report published by the Washington-based international financial institution.

"This fear that robots have eliminated jobs – this fear is not supported by the evidence so far," the World Bank's chief economist Pinelopi Koujianou Goldberg said.

The World Development Report 2019 is the latest in a series of efforts by academics, consultancies and governments to assess the impact of new technologies on employment.

Past studies have often forecast automation will destroy more jobs than it creates.

In its report, the World Bank instead stresses that the nature of work in the future will evolve.

While technological advances in automation are starting to handle thousands of routine tasks and will

eliminate many low-skill jobs in advanced economies and developing countries, they are also creating opportunities for different, more productive and more creative jobs.

"This is the Fourth Industrial Revolution, there have been three before and in each case we managed to survive, so it's not the case that machines completely eliminated humans," Ms Koujianou Goldberg said. "Eventually, we will adjust."

While the effects have been negligible on a global scale, the report said the share of industrial employment dropped more than 10 percentage points over the past two decades in countries including Britain, Spain and Singapore, as workers shifted from manufacturing to service jobs. Meanwhile, the share went up in some developing countries, such as Vietnam, where it rose from 9 per cent in 1991 to 25 per cent in 2017.

In the future, workers are more likely to have many jobs over the course of their careers, largely due to the rise of the gig economy, instead of holding down a position with the same employer for decades, according to the World Bank.

And different skills will be increasingly important, the report says. Instead of less advanced skills that can be replaced by technology, employers will increasingly be looking to hire people with advanced cognitive skills, like complex problem-solving, teamwork, reasoning and communication talents.

To ease that transition, governments should guarantee a universal

NOT DOOM AND GLOOM

This is the Fourth Industrial Revolution, there have been three before and in each case we managed to survive, so it's not the case that machines completely eliminated humans. Eventually, we will adjust.



WORLD BANK'S CHIEF ECONOMIST
PINELOPI KOUJIANOU GOLDBERG

minimum level of social protection, the World Bank said. One option could involve offering insurance independent of employment since future workers will likely flit from one job to the next.

One major area of concern for the World Bank is the impact the technological shifts will have on developing countries in Africa and elsewhere hoping to catch up to more advanced peers.

In the past, these regions could rely on growing their economies by taking advantage of low wages in their own country and opening up to foreign trade. But salaries are less relevant if machines replace more people, which could hinder the countries' efforts to catch up, Ms Koujianou Goldberg said.

BLOOMBERG

Prolonged exposure to polluted air affects productivity: Study

Joanna Seow
Manpower Correspondent

Living and working in a polluted environment is not just bad for health, but also bad for productivity, a new study has found.

"We typically think that firms benefit from lax pollution regulations by saving on emission control equipment and the like. Here, we document an adverse effect on the productivity of their workforce," said Associate Professor Alberto Salvo, one of the three economists who did the study.

Daily output falls by 1 per cent when there is a rise in PM2.5 levels by 10 micrograms per cubic m (mcg/m3) sustained over 25 days, said the researchers from the National University of Singapore (NUS) economics department.

PM2.5 readings measure the concentration of tiny particles less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter – or about one-thirtieth the diameter of a human hair – in the air.

Long-term exposure to them on a regular basis has been linked to increased risk of death from complications such as cancer or heart dis-

ease. But research on how it affects productivity is very limited, partly owing to worker output being difficult to quantify, said an NUS statement yesterday.

To study the issue, Prof Salvo, Associate Professor Liu Haoming and Dr He Jiaxiu interviewed managers at 12 companies and gathered data from two textile mills in China from January 2014 to May 2015. The trio compared the number of pieces of fabric each worker made each day against the level of air pollution the worker was exposed to over time.

They found that unlike in previous literature, workers' productivity was not immediately affected by daily fluctuations in pollution. But prolonged exposure of up to 30 days caused output levels to drop.

On possible reasons for the decline, Prof Liu said that besides the physiological impact of pollution, there could also be a psychological element to it. "Working in a highly polluted setting for long periods could affect your mood or disposition to work," he said.

The results of the study, which was controlled for factors like regional economic activity, were published in the American Economic



Journal: Applied Economics yesterday.

Prof Liu said the team chose China for the study as they needed a larger variation of air pollution levels to probe the impact on workers.

The results also apply in Singapore, where pollution levels are generally lower, he added.

Prof Salvo said that although very high levels of PM2.5 in Singapore, caused by transboundary haze, have not been frequent, the findings suggest that productivity could be hurt.

Even during normal periods, it could fall by 1 per cent if the particle

levels were raised over a fortnight or month owing to the air being more still, even if the change was only from 15 to 25 mcg/m3, he said.

As at 7pm yesterday, a regular, non-hazy day, the PM2.5 concentration ranged from 14 to 19 mcg/m3 in different parts of the island.

Given the findings, companies in Singapore can ask workers to reduce their exposure to the outdoor air if pollution levels rise, said Prof Liu. "They could encourage workers to work indoors or close the windows when they are at home."

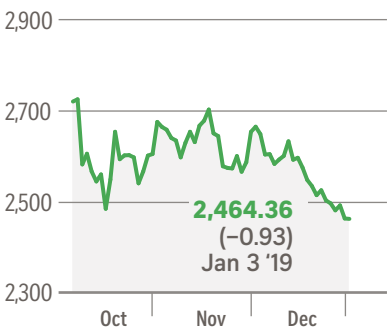
joseow@sph.com.sg

Researchers found that productivity was not immediately affected by daily fluctuations in pollution. But exposure of up to 30 days caused output levels to drop. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Hang Seng



Shanghai Comp



Nikkei 225



Dow Jones



BullsAndBears

Apple's warning on revenue rattles markets

Shares end mixed, while A\$ and Turkish lira weaken against yen in 'flash crash'

Navin Sregantan

Tech giant Apple put the cat among the pigeons yesterday with a revenue warning that roiled share and currency markets.

Its statement that slowing Chinese demand would hit revenue led to a mixed day for shares and triggered a "flash crash" in currency markets when orders came in to sell the Australian dollar and Turkish lira against the Japanese yen.

This pushed the yen markedly higher against the US dollar even though the greenback appreciated against other Asian currencies. Investors also rushed to gold.

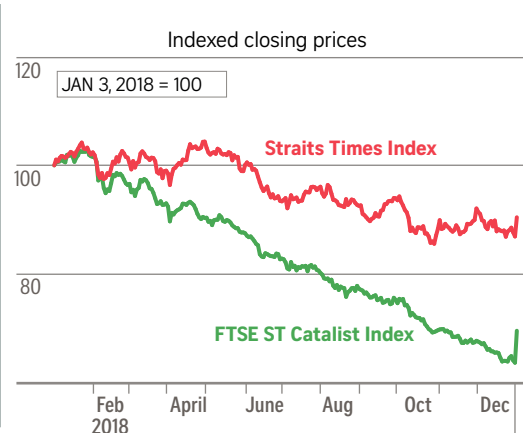
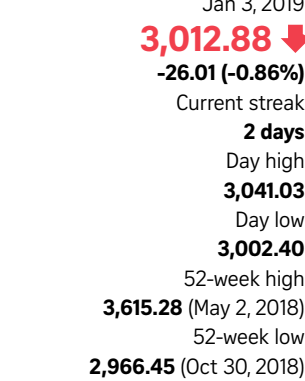
Local shares also had to contend with gun-shy investors eyeing slowing global growth, so it was no surprise when the Straits Times Index lost 26.01 points or 0.9 per cent to close at 3,012.88.

Turnover came in at 1.16 billion shares worth \$886 million, with losers beating gainers 218 to 154, while 24 of the 30 STI constituents ended the day in the red.

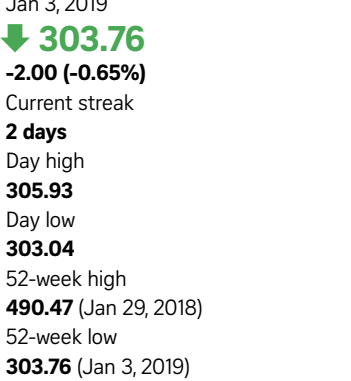
ThaiBev was the most active, dropping 2.5 per cent to 59 cents on trade of 38.2 million. Other actives included Ezion Holdings and KLV Holdings.

The biggest blue-chip gainer was Jardine Cycle & Carriage, which closed 1.5 per cent higher at \$35.28.

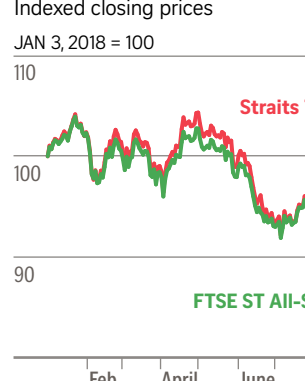
Straits Times Index



FTSE ST Catalist Index



FTSE ST All-Share Index



FTSE ST All-Share Index



Apple's stark revenue warning weighed on the sentiment of technology and semiconductor counters around the globe, including here.

Venture Corporation closed 1.8 per cent down at \$13.51, while semiconductor player UMS Holdings extended its slide, shedding a further

2.6 per cent to 55.5 cents, its lowest in just under two years.

Banks took a hit as well: DBS lost 1.7 per cent to \$23.09, its lowest since late November, OCBC dipped 0.6 per cent to \$11.03 and United Overseas Bank was 1.3 per cent down at \$23.99.

The same concerns weighed heavily on other Asian markets – Hong Kong, mainland China and South Korea all ended lower on the day.

South Korea's benchmark Kospi index slumped to a two-month low, ending the day 0.81 per cent down.

But the Australian market added 1.4 per cent as the cheaper Aussie dollar due to the "flash crash" gave more value to export-oriented listings like gold mining stocks. Malaysia's market also closed higher yesterday. Japanese markets remained closed for the new year and resume trading today.

CMC Markets analyst Margaret Yang said investors are increasingly concerned about the slowdown in consumer spending in China. She said the impact of US President Donald Trump's trade war with China has started taking effect and will likely show up when US firms start reporting financial results.

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Straits Times Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	257	+2	13086	6.2	1.2
205	161	CapitaCom Trust	175	-1	9889	4.9	1
388	298	Capitaland	324	-3	7466	3.9	0.7
232	195	CityDev	794	-7	1315	2.3	0.7
1360	780	ComfortDelGro	212	-2	4270	4.9	1.8
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2309	-40	5214	6.2	1.3
968	767	DairyFarm USD	US900	-5	165	2.3	-
141	85.5	Genting Sing	97	unch	25897	3.6	1.5
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	235	-1	11151	3.4	0.6
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US24.5	+0.5	2087	10.7	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US64.0	+6	1154	3.1	0.3
6958	5580	JHUS	US6692	-66	131	2.4	0.7
4149	3155	JSH USD	US3669	-21	93	0.9	0.4
4142	2766	Jardine C&C	3528	-40	5214	6.2	1.3
892	567	Keppel Corp	581	-5	2578	3.8	0.9
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1103	-7	5669	3.4	1.2
585	455	SATS	459	-6	1856	3.9	3.2
850	672	SGX	715	-2	1791	4.2	8.1
1184	914	SIA	925	-13	1713	4.3	0.8
292	231	SPH	231	-2	4738	5.6	1.1
370	319	ST Engineering	346	-4	2875	4.3	5.1
360	243	Sembcorp Ind	250	-1	2369	2.2	0.7
365	285	Singtel	286	-2	23728	7.2	1.6
94.5	57.5	ThaiBev	59	cd	38165	1.1	2.9
3037	2380	UOB	2399	-32	2194	4.2	1.2
938	591	UOL	600	-7	1322	2.9	0.5
2965	1348	Venture Corp	1351	-25	943	4.4	1.7
331	297	Wilmar Intl	309	-4	4705	3.2	0.9
166	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	123	-2	16862	3.7	0.9

FTSE ST Large & Mid-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	CURRENCY LAST TRADED SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
286	245	Ascendas Reit	257	+2	13086	6.2	1.2
127	105	Ascott Reit	109	+1	2775	6.5	0.9
78.5	59	Bumitama Agri	63	-4	68	1.2	1.5
185	143	CDL HTrust	146	-1	4015	-	1
205	161	CapitaCom Trust	175	-1	9889	4.9	1
388	298	Capitaland	304	-3	7466	3.9	0.7
232	195	CityDev	794	-7	1315	2.3	0.7
1360	780	ComfortDelGro	212	-2	4270	4.9	1.8
3128	2265	DBS Grp	2309	-40	5214	6.2	1.3
968	767	DairyFarm USD	US900	-5	165	2.3	-
78	59	Far East HTrust	61	unch	671	-	0.7
197	150	First Resources	153	-3	201	4.4	2
236	211	Fraser's Cpt Tr	217	unch	551	2.4	0.7
119	101	Fraser's L&I Tr	102	-1	4807	6.7	1.1
141	85.5	Genting Sing	97	unch	25897	3.6	1.5
39	22.5	Golden Agri-Res	235	-1	11151	3.4	0.6
234	167	GuocoLand Ltd	177	unch	147	4	0.5
42	23	HPH Trust USD	US24.5	+0.5	2087	10.7	0.4
744	588	HongkongLand USD	US64.0	+6	1154	3.1	0.3
6958	5580	JHUS	US6692	-66	131	2.4	0.7
4149	3155	JSH USD	US3669	-21	93	0.9	0.4
4142	2766	Jardine C&C	3528	-40	5214	6.2	1.3
59	44.5	Keppel Infra Tr	49	unch	1276	7.6	1.8
892	567	Keppel Corp	581	-5	2578	3.8	0.9
133	108	Keppel Reit	115	unch	4286	5	3.8
151	151	Man Oriental USD	208	-1	3529	5.5	0.9
273	170	Mapletree Com Tr	168	unch	4377	5.4	1.1
213	184	Mapletree Ind Tr	191	+1	2204	6.2	1.3
138	118	Mapletree Log Tr	129	+2	10887	5.9	1.2
128	107	Mapletree NAC Tr	114	-1	4363	6.6	0.9
84	73	NetLink NBN Tr	77	unch	1959	-	1
1404	1036	OCBC Bank	1103	-7	5669	3.4	1.2
215	136	OUE	142	+1	133	2.1	0.3
92.5	64.5	OUE HTrust	66.5	-0.5	402	-	0.9
250	157	Olam Intl	170	+5	550	4.4	0.9
60.8	28	Oxley	28.5	unch	358	5.3	0.8
306	256	ParkwayLife Reit	262	unch	526	5.1	1.5
121	98	Raffles Medical	109	-1	887	2.1	2.6
585	455	SATS	459	-6	1856	3.9	3.2
850	672	SGX	715	-2	1791	4.2	8.1
1184	914	SIA	925	-13	1713	4.3	0.8
337	220	SIA Engineering	233	+7	852	5.6	1.8
292	231	SPH	231	-2	4738	5.6	1.1
109	98	SPHREIT	101	unch	1205	5.5	1.1
370	319	ST Engineering	346	-4	2875	4.3	5.1
243	211	Sembcorp Ind	250	-1	2369	2.2	0.7
281	149	Sembcorp Marine	153	-2	2929	1.3	1.4
58	39	Silverlake Axis	415	+0.5	1294	7.2	6
147	88.5	SingPost	915	unch	1594	3.8	1.2
365	285	Singtel	286	-2	23728	7.2	1.6
299	158	StarHub	171	-2	2714	9.4	5.2
78	63.5	StarhillGbl Reit	68	+0.5	2073	6.7	0.7
225	163	Suntec Reit	179	+2	6801	5.6	0.9
94.5	57.5	ThaiBev	59	cd	38165	1.1	2.9
10.2	3.7	Thomson Medical	7.4	unch	5039	-	2.7
3037	2380	UOB	2399	-32	2194	4.2	1.2
938	591	UOL	600	-7	1322	2.9	0.5
2965	1348	Venture Corp	1351	-25	943	4.4	1.7
331	297	Wilmar Intl	309	-4	4705	3.2	0.9
244	183	Wing Tai	191	-2	409	4.2	0.4
166	84	YZJ Shipbldg SGD	123	-2	16862	3.7	0.9
191	116	Yanlord Land	122	-1	345	5.6	0.5

FTSE ST Small-Cap Index stocks

52-WEEK HIGH	52-WEEK LOW	COMPANY	LAST SALE	+OR-	'VOL '000	GROSS YIELD%	P/BV
145	129	AIMSAMP Cap Reit	134	+1	430	7.7	1
71	48	Accordia Golf Tr	51.5	+1	48	7.5	0.6
90.5	74	Ascendas-hTrust	77.5	+0.5	599	-	0.8
119	99	Ascendas-iTrust	105	-3	303	5.8	1.2
60	12.2	Asian Pay TV Tr	13.2	+0.2	4843	49.2	0.2
67	48	Banyan Tree	57.5	-0.5	94	17	0.7
279	115	Best World	274	+1	4609	1.5	9.8
88	76	Boustead	79.5	unch	29	3.8	1.2
126	79.5	BreadTalk	82	+0.5	104	8.5	2.2
658	521	Bukit Sembawang	566	-1	22	3.2	1.2
88.5	65.5	Cache Log Trust	69.5	-0.5	2186	10.4	1
57	39.5	Centurion	41	unch	36	6.1	0.7
171	104	China Aviation	106	+1	322	4.2	0.9
475	30	China Everbright	30.5	unch	63	1.6	0.6
165	90.5	China Sunshine	120	-5	912	2.5	1.3
107	64	Chip Eng Seng	64.5	unch	593	6.2	0.5
53.5	31.5	Cosco	32.5	-0.5	2133	-	1.4
700	260	Delong	614	-13	12	-	0.6
28	17.5	Duty Free Intl	19	-0.5	90	9.7	1.2
79	67.5	EC World Reit	69.5	unch	250	8.7	0.8
59.5	47	ESR-REIT	51	unch	1027	7.5	0.9
142	92	First Reit	99	+1	593	8.7	1
155	134	Fraser's Com Tr	138	+1	1424	7	0.9
82.5	66.5	Fraser's HTrust	70	unch	140	-	0.9
28.5	16.4	Geo Energy Res	17.6	+0.5	1636	5.7	1
91	70.5	HRnetGroup	78	-1	24	2.9	2.4
70	52	Health Mgt Intl	55	unch	418	0.6	5.3
279	73	Hi-P Intl	85.5	-2.5	2816	29.2	1.3
283	252	Hong Leong Fin	254	unch	26	5.1	0.6
82.5	71	IREIT Global	72.5	unch	47	8.2	1
42	18.3	Indofood Agri	19	-0.4	117	-	0.2
79.5	43	Japfa	73	+1.5	1930	0.7	1.4
84.5	49	KSH	49.5	-1	153	4.4	0.8
86.9	53	Kepp-KBS Reit USD	63	+2	1081	-	0.5
148	128	Keppel DC Reit	136	unch	2861	5.2	1.3
188	132	Keppel T&T	187	unch	270	1.9	1.2
119	7	KrisEnergy	71	-0.2	4424	-	0.9
79.5	44.5	Lian Beng	47	unch	68	4.8	0.3
42.5	18	Lippo Malls Tr	18.3	unch	1887	18.8	0.7
55.5	30.5	MM2 Asia	30.5	-1	1096	-	1.7
98.5	69.5	ManulifeReit USD	81	+2	787	6.8	0.7
121	95	Metro	101	+1	16	5	0.6
32	5	Noble	81	susp	-	-	-
66.9	45	OUE Com Reit	45.5	-0.5	300	10.3	0.5
68	54	PEC	56	-1	44	3.6	0.6
46	17	POSH	17.1	-0.9	51	-	0.5
66	44.5	Q&M Dental	50	-0.5	435	3.2	3.6
117	55.5	QAF Ltd	58.5	+0.5	132	8.5	0.7
86.5	70	RHT HealthTrust	72.5	-0.5	692	6.2	1
124	96	Riverstone	115	-4	71	2	3.8
55	22	SIIC Environment	28	unch	227	-	0.5
45	38	Sabana Reit	40	unch	231	8.3	0.8
119	90	Sheng Siong	107	unch	780	3.1	5.5
25.5	12	Sino Grandness	12.6	+0.1	422	-	0.2
72	56	Soilbuild&ZsReit	58	unch	180	9.8	0.9
129	83	TianjinZX USD	83	-1	95	-	0.7
50	32.5	Tuan Sing	35	unch	259	1.7	0.4
136	54	UMS	55.5	-1.5	1491	9	1.3
112	58.5	Valuetronics	66	unch	671	6.9	15.1
17.8	8.3	Ying Li Intl	11.6	+0.3	6015	-	0.3
55	24	Yoma Strategic	34.5	unch	1311	0.7	0.9
37.5	16.1	Yongnam	18.3	-0.3	414	-	0.4

Cash-strapped water treatment firm Hyflux said in a regulatory filing that the duration of the latest extensions is linked to its debt moratorium, which will provide the group with time to reorganise its liabilities and businesses.

PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO



Hyflux gets more time to report financials

Extensions given for Q2, Q3 and full year 2018 results and AGM

Cash-strapped water treatment company Hyflux has been granted further extensions to report its financial results and to conduct its annual general meeting (AGM) as it undergoes reorganisation.

The firm now has until June 30 or before the lifting of its trading suspension to announce its results for the second and third quarters of the 2018 financial year. This is an extension of 4½ months.

The full-year 2018 results have been given a four-month extension, it announced late on Wednesday.

Hyflux also received a four-

month extension to conduct the annual general meeting for 2018. This was originally supposed to be held by April 30 this year. It has also received a three-month extension to report results for the first quarter of the 2019 financial year.

The latest extensions from the Singapore Exchange come after Hyflux asked in July last year for extensions in announcing financial statements.

Shares in Hyflux remain suspended and last traded at 21 cents on May 18 last year.

The firm said in a regulatory filing on Wednesday that the duration of these further extensions is linked to its debt moratorium, which will provide the group with time to reorganise its liabilities and businesses.

The High Court had previously

The full-year 2018 results have also been given a four-month extension, it was announced late on Wednesday.

granted Hyflux a 4½-month extension of its debt moratorium to April 30 this year.

The company added that it is facing stringent controls on cash, such as paying only critical expenses relevant to the reorganisation.

“The group is currently progressing with the reorganisation, and the aim is to conclude the reorganisation as soon as possible and con-

tinue trading with a more stable financial position,” Hyflux said.

It had announced on Oct 18 last year that it had entered into a restructuring agreement with an investor for a total investment of \$530 million, subject to various conditions.

Hyflux said that since it is negotiating the terms of its reorganisation, releasing financial statements before there is clarity on any financing proposals could result in inaccurate and incomplete information.

“The company can only start to prepare the relevant financial statements when it has certainty regarding the terms of the reorganisation and the financing proposals (if any), which is expected to take additional time,” Hyflux said.

Hyflux said on Monday it has obtained approval from secured lender Maybank to extend the timeline for the divestment of the Tuaspring integrated water and power plant.

Maybank is now giving Hyflux until Jan 31 to execute a binding agreement with a successful bidder or investor, an extension of the Oct 29, 2018, deadline earlier agreed on.

The bank can terminate the collaboration agreement if the new deadline is breached.

Company Briefs

Fintonia Group

Singapore-based private equity firm Fintonia Group has led a management buyout of BlueScope Buildings’ pre-engineered buildings business in Vietnam. The newly-formed Nova Buildings, headquartered in Singapore, will take over ownership and operations of BlueScope’s key fabrication assets at Bien Hoa city in Dong Nai province, led by key operational team members who formerly managed facilities under BlueScope Buildings.

The plant will serve as Nova Buildings’ key manufacturing site and export hub for South-east Asia. BlueScope Buildings is a global manufacturer of engineered building solutions.

Nova Buildings and Fintonia declined to comment on the size of the deal. But it could cost more than US\$10 million (S\$13.7 million) to build the same assets greenfield.

Creative Technology

Creative Technology has started taking orders for the first headphones to feature built-in technology based on its key Super X-Fi (SXF1) system.

The roll-out of the SXFI AIR headphone series comes after the release of Creative’s SXFI headphone amplifier in September last year, which was the first product to feature the Singapore-based audio electronics maker’s closely watched headphone holography technology. Beyond expanding the product range, the new gadgets will also feature better compatibility with other manufacturers’ platforms, most notably Apple’s iOS devices.

Creative shares fell four cents or 1.11 per cent to \$3.55 yesterday.

Aspen (Group) Holdings

Malaysia developer Aspen (Group) Holdings has acquired approximately 45 acres of land in Bandar Cassia, Batu Kawan in Penang from Penang Development Corp at an aggregate consideration of RM98 million (S\$32.3 million). The acquisition was made through an Aspen subsidiary and the parcel is intended to be developed as part of Aspen Vision City, as disclosed in Aspen’s initial public offering documents in 2017.

A deposit of RM19.6 million had already been paid in 2017. The balance purchase price was paid using internal resources and through the full drawdown of the Islamic flexi term financing facility of RM70 million granted by Hong Leong Islamic Bank Berhad to the Aspen subsidiary.

Aspen shares closed at \$0.124 yesterday.

New appointments at Carousell to drive regional growth

Online marketplace Carousell has beefed up its team on the corporate floor.

It has appointed Ms Tan Su Lin as vice-president of operations and Mr Colin Bryar as adviser to its executive leadership group, the company announced yesterday.

The firm said it made the appointments as it seeks to drive innovation and enhance user experience of its marketplace across the region.

Carousell began in Singapore in August 2012 and now has a presence in seven markets across Asia. It is backed by Rakuten Ventures, 500 Startups and DBS Bank, among others.

Before joining Carousell, Ms Tan was deputy chief marketing officer and senior vice-president of sales strategy and operations at Singapore Press Holdings. She has more

than two decades of experience in digital strategy, marketing and classifieds.

Her new role involves leading teams to scale up operations in Singapore and the region. She will report to Carousell co-founder and chief executive Quek Siu Rui.

Carousell began in Singapore in August 2012 and now has a presence in seven markets across Asia. It is backed by Rakuten Ventures, 500 Startups and DBS, among others.

Mr Bryar will focus on “identifying opportunities for faster growth, and providing a world-class customer experience for users across the region”, Carousell said.

It noted that he has led digital platform businesses for over 25 years in various roles at Amazon and IMDb, and as chief operating officer at Alibaba-owned RedMart.

He also served as technical adviser to Amazon chief executive Jeff Bezos for two years.

Mr Quek said: “We are always on the lookout for world-class talent who share our values and passion for solving meaningful problems with technology.”

“Their collective experience and proven track record in transforming organisations amid complex digital environments will be invaluable as we power through our next chapter of growth.”

Interbank currency rates

Currencies	Against US\$ Bid	Against US\$ Offer	Against US\$ Bid	Against US\$ Offer
Jan 3				
US\$/US\$ to one unit of foreign currency:				
Australian dollar	0.9506	0.9512	0.6961	0.6963
Canadian dollar	1.0021	1.0028	0.7341	0.7338
Euro	1.5515	1.5526	1.1361	1.1365
NZ dollar	0.9066	0.9075	0.6639	0.6643
Sterling pound	1.7127	1.7139	1.2542	1.2546
US dollar	1.3656	1.3661	-	-
S\$/US\$ to 100 units of foreign currency:				
Chinese renminbi	19.8618	19.8757	14.5444	14.5493
Danish kroner	20.7784	20.7892	15.2156	15.2173
Hong Kong dollar	1.743	1.744	12.7658	12.7663
Indian Rupee	1.94	1.94	1.4226	1.4231
Indonesian rupiah	0.0095	0.0095	0.0069	0.0069
Japanese yen	127.00	127.08	0.9300	0.9302
Korean won	0.1211	0.1213	0.0887	0.0888
Malaysian ringgit	3.295	3.300	2.4133	2.4154
New Taiwan dollar	4.4184	4.4243	3.2355	3.2387
Norwegian krone	15.6079	15.6190	11.4294	11.4333
Philippine peso	2.5925	2.5954	1.8984	1.8999
Saudi riyal	36.4053	36.4225	26.6588	26.6617
Swedish krona	15.1218	15.1323	11.0733	11.0770
Swiss franc	138.3026	138.4093	10.1261	10.1371
Thai Baht	4.2463	4.2491	3.1095	3.1104

MSCI INDICES

Jan 2	Index	In local curr % dy	% yr Change
World Preliminary	1439.9	-0.1	-0.1
EAFE Preliminary	1005.4	-0.2	-0.2
Europe Preliminary	1403.6	-0.1	-0.1
Australia	1122.9	-1.6	-1.6
Austria Preliminary	501.5	0.7	0.7
Belgium Preliminary	908.5	-0.7	-0.7
Canada Preliminary	1834.5	0.2	0.2
Denmark Preliminary	7485.2	1.1	1.1
Finland Preliminary	655.0	0.3	0.3
France Preliminary	1698.8	-0.9	-0.9
Germany Preliminary	845.8	0.2	0.2
Greece Preliminary	43.2	-0.5	-0.5
India	1252.1	-1.1	-0.8
Indonesia	7056.6	-0.3	-0.3
Ireland Preliminary	179.3	0.1	0.1
Israel Preliminary	232.4	0.1	0.8
Italy Preliminary	622.6	0.1	0.1
Japan	893.2	0.0	0.0
Korea	595.1	-1.5	-1.5
Malaysia	574.6	-1.2	-1.2
Netherlands Preliminary	1453.8	-0.3	-0.3
New Zealand	132.7	0.0	0.0
Norway Preliminary	2793.6	0.3	0.3
Pakistan	363.4	-1.0	1.8
Philippines	1267.9	0.5	0.5
Portugal Preliminary	80.7	0.0	0.0
Singapore	1579.9	-0.9	-0.9
Singapore Free	339.7	-0.9	-0.9

Government securities

Period	Issue code	Coupon rate (%)	Maturity	Close Bid	High	Day's Low
Jan 3						
2-Year	NY05100N	3.250%	01-Sep-20	102.25	0.00	0.00
5-Year	NX13100H	2.750%	01-Jul-23	103.59	103.65	103.65
10-Year	NX18100A	2.625%	01-May-28	104.83	105.10	105.00
15-Year	NZ13100V	3.375%	01-Sep-33	113.55	113.90	113.62
20-Year	NZ16100X	2.250%	01-Aug-36	98.77	99.05	99.05
30-Year	NA16100H	2.750%	01-Mar-46	105.72	0.00	0.00

Note: Based on latest issue

Source: Monetary Authority of Singapore

Source: MSCI

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THE STRAITS TIMES

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CHAN AH HOE

Age: 100
passed away peacefully on 2 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Baey Yeow Beng (Deceased)

Sons:
Mah Boon Leong, Joe @ Baey Boon Leong
Baey Boon Keow, Victor @ Mah Boon Keow
Baey Boon Lin, Benny

Daughters-in-law:
Goh Ai Ting, Chris
Han Nah Nah, June
Tong Young Gan, Tanny

Daughter:
Mah Hu Beng, Susan @ Baey Hu Beng

Godson:
Baey Gim Chew

Grandsons:
Mah Chwee Kim, Mark
Mah Chwee Bock, Edwin
Mah Chwee Chuan, Lester
Baey Chwee Seng, Dean
Baey Chwee Leng, Don
Baey Chwee Joo, Ian

Granddaughters:
Wu Jia Min, Jasmine
Baey Hui Yi, Grace
Low Lean Yi, Jolie
Low Min Yi, Jennifer
Low Yok Yi, Jean

Great Grandsons:
Mah Yi En
Noah Baey
Cephas Baey
Heng Zhi Liang, Brian

Goddaughter-in-law:
Foong Wei Keng

Granddaughters-in-law:
Tiu Chwee Wah

Ng Ling Siew
Thong Yanling, Adeline
Ling Zhi Ying, Sheryl

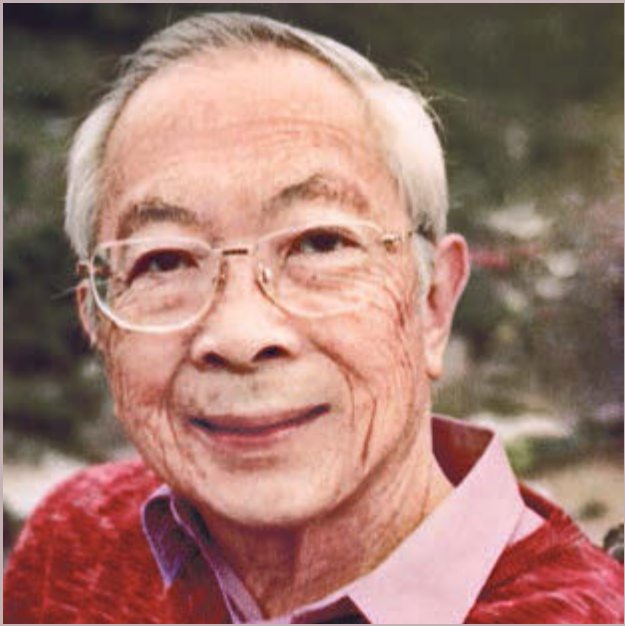
Grandsons-in-law:
Lim Hang Loon

Heng Kin Hong, Raymond

Great Granddaughter:
Lim Li Shan, Isabel

And all relatives.

Wake is held at 29A Jalan Hajjah, Singapore 468725.
Cortege will leave on Sunday 6 January 2019 at 1pm for
Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 2pm.



LEE KIP LEE


(1922 – 2018)

passed away peacefully on
29 December 2018.

A private funeral was
held on 2 January 2019.

Dearly missed by sons
Dick, John, Peter & Andrew,
relatives and friends.

*"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day:
the night cometh, when no man can work." John 9:4*



Rev Dr Peter Ng Eng Hoe

Founding Pastor of Jesus Saves Mission

Age: 88
Was called home to be with the Lord on 3 January 2019.
Dearly missed and fondly remembered by all who were touched by his life.

Wife: Elizabeth Tow Siew Mui

Sisters:
Ng Chiau Gian
Ng Chiau Kong
Ng Chiau Koh

Brother:
Rev Dr Ng Eng Kee

Sons:
Joseph Ng
Benjamin Ng

Daughter-in-law:
Alicia Tan


Grandsons:
John Ng, Jordan Ng and Joshua Ng

Wake at Jesus Saves Mission,
68 Lorong 16 Geylang, #02-02, Association Building, Singapore 398889
on 4 Friday January 2019 (Dinner at 6.00pm, Service at 8.00pm)

Encoffining Service on Saturday 5 January 2019 at 1.00pm,
thereafter cortege leaves at 2.00pm
for Choa Chu Kang Christian Cemetery for burial at 3.00pm.

Memorial Service on Sunday 6 January 2019
at Jesus Saves Mission at 7.30pm.

Come and celebrate the life of



LTC (Ret) Lee Swee Boo, Louis


A loving Husband, devoted Father, loyal Brother and dependable Friend.
Join us in celebrating the life of a man who dared to live life to its fullest
and bravest. In that same fashion, he fought a fierce fight all the way
till the end. We are all very proud of him.

He will be missed by:
*His loving wife Lilian Mark
His 3 'monkeys' Clara, Charmaine, and John
And all relatives and friends.*


Come and say your final goodbyes at
Singapore Funeral Parlour Level 2,
91 Tampines Link Singapore 528746,
4 - 5 January 2019 from 10.00am onwards.

Service timings
4 January 2019, 7.30pm (For family only)
5 January 2019, 7.30pm


Cortege leaves on Sunday 6 January 2019 at 2.00pm for
Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for service and cremation at 3.00pm.



In memory of
a loved one




In memory of
a loved one




In memory of
a loved one

**With Deepest Sympathy and
Heartfelt Condolences to
the Family of the late**



LTC (RET) LEE SWEE BOO, LOUIS
Passed away on 3 January 2019.

**Always Remembered By Officers,
Warrant Officers, Specialists & Men of
6th Singapore Division
Singapore Armed Forces**



LEE SWEE BOO LOUIS
Age: 56
passed away peacefully
on 3 January 2019
**Dearly missed & fondly
remembered by
friends & comrades.**
We were soldiers
41st Battalion
Singapore Armoured
Regiment
(1994-1996)

**2nd Anniversary
In Loving Memory of**



Irene Lim Suh Fen
Departed on 4th January 2017
*Time takes away the edge of grief.
But memory turns back every leaf.
That unselfish life, it has not died.*
Always Cherished by
Family and Loved Ones.



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IKHSAN GOES FOR TRIAL IN NORWAY

Agent says Singapore forward's talent and mentality are good fit for second-tier Raufoss

David Lee

HE TICKS ALL THE BOXES

Ikhsan is fast, strong, and has a good height. Most importantly, he has the dedication and is really hardworking. He seems like a good boy with the right mentality to succeed in Europe.



NAVJOT SINGH BRAR, Norwegian agent, on Ikhsan Fandi's attributes.

As he ushered in 2019 on Tuesday, local football starlet Ikhsan Fandi had only one New Year resolution – to earn a playing contract in Europe.

Early this morning, just over a day after his older brother Irfan flew to join Thai League 2 club Bangkok Glass, the 19-year-old headed to Norway for a trial with Raufoss IL.

Raufoss are newly promoted to the second-tier 1. divisjon, after they won the 2. divisjon title last season. The new season starts in March.

Before he left, Ikhsan told The Straits Times: "I'm very happy and excited to be given another opportunity to 'trial' with a European team.

"I'm blessed to have been able to train with different overseas clubs since young and, if there is a chance, I would love to continue im-

proving and challenging myself at Raufoss. The target is definitely to land a contract and I'm going to try my best to impress the coaches.

"It doesn't bother me they are from the second tier. This could be a stepping stone for me if there are top-tier scouts watching Raufoss' games."

While the temperature forecast in Raufoss is from -6 to 1 deg C for the rest of the week, Ikhsan said the wintry conditions do not faze him as he and Irfan had gone for a trial with Dutch side Groningen in March last year and lived in Chile from 2014 to 2016, when they trained with Universidad Catolica.

This latest trial was made possible by Norwegian agent Navjot Singh Brar, who was recommended to Ikhsan by his friend Yahya Broer.

The latter coached Ikhsan almost 10 years ago at the Arsenal Soccer School in Indonesia where the Fandi lived then.

After doing his homework, Brar flew to Singapore during the AFF Suzuki Cup in November and watched the 1.83m, 79kg forward play in the 1-0 win over Indonesia at the National Stadium.

While Ikhsan did not score in that game, Brar was impressed with the potential he saw in the teenager.

Ikhsan enjoyed a breakthrough year in 2018, scoring five times in eight games for Singapore from September to November, including a bicycle-kick goal in the 6-1 Suzuki Cup win over Timor-Leste.

He also netted eight times in 20 games for the Young Lions in the Singapore Premier League.

In a phone interview, Brar told ST: "I also watched him at one of the training sessions, because I always feel it is important to get a sense of a player's mentality not just in matches.

"Ikhsan is fast, strong, and has a good height. Most importantly, he has the dedication and is really hardworking. He seems like a good boy with the right mentality to succeed in Europe.

"I spoke to clubs in Norway and found Raufoss to be a good fit for his age and qualities. My goal is not to bring Ikhsan to a club where he cannot play; he must get to play.

"Although the Raufoss coach Christian Johnsen is a good friend of mine, he must ultimately feel like



Ikhsan Fandi is unfazed by the wintry conditions in Scandinavia as he has been on trial in the Netherlands and also lived in Chile. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Ikhsan is the right person for his team and can be part of his group."

Raufoss are about an 80-minute drive from Norway's capital Oslo. They have more than a century of history and last played in the top flight in 1974.

Ikhsan's father and Young Lions coach Fandi Ahmad said: "Ikhsan's contract with the Young Lions ended last season and he also completed his National Service earlier last year. Like any other player in this situation, he is free and encour-

aged to go if an overseas club want to have a look at him.

"If he gets an offer from Raufoss, we will be looking at whether the club can give him regular playing time in a stronger league as that will be important for him to learn, improve and contribute to the national team and Under-22s.

"If he doesn't get an offer, we will still have a place for him at the Young Lions."

davidlee@sph.com.sg



Romelu Lukaku beating Newcastle defender Jamaal Lascelles to the ball to score United's opener past Martin Dubravka at St James' Park. Marcus Rashford sealed the win which maintained Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's perfect start. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

After four wins, Solskjaer reluctant to leave United post

LONDON • Ole Gunnar Solskjaer knows a thing or two about impact substitutions, but even Manchester United's former supersub extraordinaire must have been pleasantly surprised to see Romelu Lukaku step off the bench and score within 38 seconds on Wednesday.

Until then, Solskjaer had seemed outwitted by Rafael Benitez's contain-and-counter tactics. But, by the end of a bitterly cold night, Marcus Rashford had added a second to seal a 2-0 win over Newcastle.

It makes the Norwegian the first United manager since Matt Busby in 1946 to win his opening four games. He acknowledged it would be "hard" for him to relinquish the role and return to his "day job" at

Molde in Norway in May.

"Of course I won't want to leave," the 45-year-old said, semi-teasingly. "I don't want to."

His smile suggested he knows he will almost certainly have to, although much more of this and all bets will be off.

If United's flight to the warmth of Dubai tomorrow for a mid-season training break should be a happy one, Newcastle remain far too close to the relegation zone for comfort.

Things certainly appeared to have changed since the last time Solskjaer patrolled the away technical area at the St James' Park in 2014.

Back then, Alan Pardew was in charge of a home team whose 3-0 win confirmed Cardiff's relegation

from the Premier League.

Not that Jose Mourinho's interim successor could afford to relax, even with a new-found sense of creative liberation, that was cowed and cramped by his predecessor, leading to 12 goals before the game.

Indeed, United could easily have conceded early when Phil Jones' poor back pass played Salomon Rondon outside. In the end, the defender recovered superbly to rescue the situation.

"Finally we kept a clean sheet," Solskjaer told Sky Sports. "A very professional performance. We didn't hit the heights that we can do, but we were in control, kept plugging away and got the goals."

At the other end, Paul Pogba, the

1946

The only other year a Manchester United manager in Matt Busby won his first four league games, a feat matched by Ole Gunnar Solskjaer.

chief beneficiary of the regime change with four goals and three assists, regularly advanced down the inside-left channel with destructive intent but the final ball was not quite coming off against the hosts' five-man defence.

Yet this was also very much a collective effort, a masterclass in the art of assiduous closing down. With less than half an hour left, the time had come to liberate Lukaku and Alexis Sanchez from the bench.

Lukaku scored with his first touch when Slovakia goalkeeper Martin Dubravka uncharacteristically spilled Rashford's dipping 25m free kick. The forward reacted with alacrity, responding faster than Jamaal Lascelles to drive the re-

bound home from six yards.

Said Solskjaer: "A good first touch from a sub. When you see big Romelu Lukaku running towards you, as a 'keeper you might take your hands away."

All that remained was for an unmarked Rashford to slide a shot through Dubravka's legs at the end of a move he had started. It involved Lukaku cueing up Sanchez, who marked his return from hamstring trouble with an assist that rekindled hopes of a top-four spot.

"Marcus has a great hit," said Solskjaer. "He must have been watching Cristiano (Ronaldo) practising. Without hitting the heights, it was a very professional performance."

THE GUARDIAN, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Chelsea's Eden Hazard returned to his favoured winger role on Wednesday but could not find a way past Southampton goalkeeper Angus Gunn. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

TOP STRIKER WANTED TO BEAT THE BLUES

Chelsea boss Sarri eyes reinforcements after stalemate with Saints, but board has final say

BLUNT BLUES

38

Chelsea's league goal tally, the lowest among the Premier League's top six.

LONDON • Maurizio Sarri admitted Chelsea need attacking reinforcements after they wasted a chance to cement their place in the Premier League's top four with a 0-0 draw against struggling Southampton on Wednesday.

Alvaro Morata was back in the league starting XI for the first time since the defeat at Wolves on Dec 5, replacing the injured Olivier Giroud. But he fluffed two good chances and had another contentiously ruled out for offside.

Eden Hazard was twice denied by 22-year-old goalkeeper Angus Gunn, who had a top-flight debut to remember for the Saints, rejuvenated under new manager Ralph Hasenhuttl.

The Blues, the lowest scorers in the top six with only 38 goals, failed to score for the third time in their last five home league games.

The tepid and one-paced performance raised more questions about the need for a top-class

striker on a day they splashed out £58 million (\$599.7 million) on Borussia Dortmund midfielder Christian Pulisic.

"The club knows my opinion. I think we need something else for our (attack)," Sarri said when asked if he would consider recalling on-loan forwards Michy Batshuayi and Tammy Abraham.

It was only last week that the Italian said he would not enter the market for a centre forward.

He made it clear the responsibility for new signings lies with owner Roman Abramovich, saying: "It depends on the board, not on me. I have to think of the training. I have to try to improve my players in the offensive phase."

"We played a good match for 80 minutes, then we were in trouble in the last 20. We have to try to solve the problem. We were in control of every match recently, but it was not easy to score the first goal."

Hazard has often been cast in the centre forward's role, with Morata scoring only seven goals this term and none in the league since Nov 4.

On his recall, the former Real Madrid star looked completely

bereft of touch and confidence.

Hazard looked more vibrant back in his favoured winger role, but failed to torment the Saints once again despite having been involved in seven goals against them in the last six matches in all competitions.

While successive away wins at Watford and Palace made it a happy Christmas for Chelsea, their first home game of the new year was a lot like their last in 2018.

Despite dominating Leicester on Dec 22, they were beaten 1-0 as they failed to break down the visitors' defence.

The boos rang out at full-time as Cesc Fabregas, who came on as a 68th-minute substitute for his 500th club appearance in English football, was waving to the home fans. He wants to join Monaco this month and hopes the club can sign a replacement.

Chelsea remain in fourth on 44 points, just three ahead of Arsenal in the race to qualify for the Champions League. And they still have to visit both the Manchester clubs, Arsenal and Liverpool.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, THE GUARDIAN

An American in the big time at last

WASHINGTON • For some 25 years, American players have been carving out a modest presence overseas.

Many have been goalkeepers and defensive types. Some have arrived with scoring portfolios forged in Major League Soccer. Several were dual nationals, born and trained abroad.

Intra-European transfers involving king's ransoms and glamorous suitors were reserved for the likes of David Beckham, Cristiano Ronaldo and Neymar; for Manchester United, Real Madrid and Barcelona; for Brazilians, Argentinians and Spaniards.

Certainly not for Americans.

Christian Pulisic, 20, busted that mould on Wednesday when English Premier League titans Chelsea signed him from Borussia Dortmund for £58 million (\$599.7 million).

The fee was more than three times the previous record for a US player – in May 2017, defender John Brooks left German club Hertha Berlin to sign for Wolfsburg for €20 million (\$31 million) – and around the 25th largest in the sport's history.

Pulisic will remain with Dortmund this season, then in August become the first high-profile American, not including goalkeepers, to suit up for an English heavyweight.

Brian McBride and Clint Dempsey did score goals for Fulham, but the Cottagers operate in the shadows of London brethren. Claudio Reyna and DaMarcus Beasley liked the ball at their feet. John Harkes played for trophies at Wembley. Tim Howard, Kasey Keller and Brad Friedel were world-class goalkeepers.

Pulisic has always been different. His electric skill set – initiated in Hershey, Pennsylvania, by parents who played at George Mason University and took him abroad in early 2015 – belies the reputation of Americans being hard workers, supporting actors and little else.

Amid gains in the sport since the late 1980s, the US has developed few creative male prospects suited for the world's brightest stages.

Where has Freddy Adu gone?

In terms of dynamic attackers, the closest comparison to Pulisic

was Landon Donovan. Their acceleration and confidence with the ball are eerily similar.

Donovan, however, spent the bulk of his decorated career in San Jose and Los Angeles before retiring last year, never making a European breakthrough despite opportunities in Germany and England.

As a teenager, Pulisic was starting regularly in the Bundesliga, which sits in the top tier of European circuits with the Premier League, Spain's LaLiga, Italy's Serie A and France's Ligue 1. Dortmund also typically qualify for the Champions League, the continent's elite club competition.

Given his high-level experience at such a young age, he was one of the top five transfer targets this winter despite his lessening role at Dortmund. Bumped from the lineup by English teenager Jadon Sancho, he has appeared in 11 of 17 league matches, starting five and scoring once. He has continued to start in the Champions League.

Given his profile and cost, the Blues, whose last of six English titles came in 2017, are almost sure of thrusting him into the line-up next summer. Beyond his contributions on the field, Chelsea are, no doubt, counting on a marketing bump. Through pre-season tours and TV exposure, European clubs have made great strides in recent years appealing to US audiences.

Given the historical England-US ties, and that NBC Sports' presentation of the EPL is akin to the National Football League which is still the most-watched sport, Chelsea are eyeing an uptick in exposure and jersey sales.

NBC is certainly thrilled about building coverage around an exciting US player. Two defenders and a defensive midfielder comprise the current US contingent in the EPL.

Pulisic's move is also seen as a victory for US men's football which, in the wake of the World Cup qualifying fiasco, has fallen off the radar and begun major renovations.

Before his transfer, Pulisic was already the centrepiece of the programme. Wearing Chelsea colours and competing in the sport's most popular league, he will soon inherit a role no American has ever taken.

WASHINGTON POST



Borussia Dortmund's Christian Pulisic is the most expensive American player in history after Chelsea paid £58 million for his services. PHOTO: REUTERS

SportsWorld

Bruce takes charge at Sheffield Wednesday

LONDON • Steve Bruce has been named as the new manager of English Championship football club Sheffield Wednesday, succeeding Jos Luhukay who was sacked last month.

The 58-year-old, whose first managerial job was with Wednesday's city rivals Sheffield United in 1998, will take over on Feb 1, with long-time coaching associates Steve Agnew and Stephen Clemence the caretakers.

Bruce took Aston Villa to the Championship play-off final last season but they lost to Fulham at Wembley and he was sacked in October.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

'Torn inside' but Alfaro accepts Boca top job

BUENOS AIRES • Argentinian giants Boca Juniors named Gustavo Alfaro as their new coach on Wednesday, just hours after former boss Guillermo Barros Schelotto joined the LA Galaxy.

Schelotto left after defeat by arch-rivals River Plate in their

historic Copa Libertadores final, where the second leg was postponed twice following an attack on the Boca team bus by rival fans before being played in Madrid.

Alfaro, 56, who leaves another Buenos Aires club, Huracan, said he felt a "mixture of pride and challenge. It wasn't an easy decision because I was torn inside".

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Tough work for Djokovic but easier for Nishikori

DOHA • Novak Djokovic admitted he had to fight to come back from a set down to beat world No. 36 Marton Fucsovics of Hungary at the Qatar Open on Wednesday.

The world No. 1 eventually triumphed 4-6, 6-4, 6-1 in the second round, with the Serb breaking only in the 10th game of the second set to send the match into a rubber.

At the Brisbane International yesterday, Japanese second seed Kei Nishikori beat Grigor Dimitrov of Bulgaria 7-5, 7-5 to set up a semi-final meeting with France's Jeremy Chardy tomorrow.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Athletes call for Wada to ban Russia again

MONTREAL • The World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) has been warned by its own athletes' committee that if it does not ban Russia again, it will have failed clean athletes.

Wada came under fire after the Russian authorities allowed a Dec 31 deadline to hand over doping data from its Moscow laboratory to lapse, the key condition of a controversial deal to lift the three-year suspension on the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (Rusada) in September.

It would have paved the way for Russia's athletes to return to competition across all sports after a 2016 report that uncovered a state-sponsored doping programme.

To make matters worse, Wada president Craig Reedie had offered a "100 per cent" guarantee the Russians would comply in November.

Wada's compliance review committee (CRC) will meet on Jan 14-15 to make a recommendation to the executive committee on how to proceed. But the athletes' committee said the only option is for Russia to be suspended again.

It said in a statement: "We now expect that following the process recommended by the CRC that Russia will be declared non-compliant."

"Only this action will be suitable and appropriate in the view of the

athletes. Anything less will be considered a failure by Wada to act on behalf of clean athletes."

Wada also faced mounting pressure from national anti-doping organisations (Nado), including from the United States and Germany, who called for an immediate review from the CRC.

"We recognise Rusada has been working with Wada in an effort to resolve these issues, but the conditions... were unequivocal and, without data, there can be only one outcome," Nado leaders said. "The importance of this situation does not warrant providing a further two weeks for Russia to comply."

UK Anti-Doping, which did not add its name to the statement, said it was "deeply concerned" by Russia's behaviour. US Anti-Doping Agency chief Travis Tygart added: "No one is surprised this deadline was ignored and it's time for Wada to stop being played by the Russians."

Last month, the International Association of Athletics Federations said it was maintaining Russia's ban from track and field. Russia's athletics team were barred from the 2016 Rio Olympics and also missed the World Championships in London a year later.

THE GUARDIAN, REUTERS

LOTTERY

TOTO

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Sat, 5 Jan 2019				
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English Cup	Tranmere	Tottenham	3.45am	LW*
Spanish League	Espanyol	Leganes	4.00am	LW*

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GEORGE'S EGO NOT BRUISED DESPITE BOOS

'Bad guy' scores 37pts to help Thunder beat Lakers; insists no 'ill will' with LA supporters

LOS ANGELES • Paul George was the "bad guy" who snubbed his hometown team, the Los Angeles Lakers, to stay with the Oklahoma City.

And, when he turned up at the Staples Centre, shrugged off a chorus of boos and poured in 37 points to lead the Thunder to a 107-100 victory on Wednesday, he was the bad guy twice over.

George, considered one of the most likeable players in the National Basketball Association, played down the fans' reactions. "I was prepared for it," he told reporters. "I'm the bad guy, and that's fine."

"I'm not the only guy from the LA area who didn't decide to play here. You can go down the whole list of guys from this beautiful city. It is what it is. The decision has been made. No ill will."

It was just as well that the forward chose the right day to be fired up, picking up the slack from his curiously misfiring fellow California native. Russell Westbrook had a triple-double, that included 16 rebounds and 10 assists, but had only 14 points.

George, 28, went 13 of 18 on two-pointers to compensate for going 2 of 11 from beyond the arc. He led five other teammates in double figures, with New Zealander Steven Adams adding 14 points and starter Jerami Grant had 13.

Their all-round offence proved too much for the Lakers, who were without the injured LeBron James for a fourth game.

Before that, LA traded games with the Sacramento Kings that

sandwiched a loss to the LA Clippers. The Lakers are eighth in the West on 21-17 while the Thunder remain third on 24-13.

"All four games since LeBron's been out, we've had leads," said Josh Hart, who had 13 points. "We've been playing well. They've all been one- or two-possession games we could've, and a couple we should've, won."

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope added

NOTHING PERSONAL

I'm not the only guy from the LA area who didn't decide to play here. You can go down the whole list of guys from this beautiful city. It is what it is. The decision has been made. No ill will.



PAUL GEORGE, Oklahoma City forward, putting the situation in perspective.

25 points off the bench, while Brandon Ingram had 17.

Kyle Kuzma, second to James in points per game on 18.3, had a bruised lower back. He was unable to play in the second half and was scheduled for an MRI scan yesterday.

George's ego was not bruised despite being booed every time he touched the ball.

"I thought I handled it better tonight, just being locked in, being ready," said the player, who was similarly booed by the Pacers fans and knew what to expect.

"In Indy, I expected to be booed, but didn't know to what extent. Here, I knew."

He stated his preference to join the Lakers before leaving Indiana to join the Thunder in 2017 and again chose to stay with them weeks before his free agency started last July. His choice angered Lakers fans because of long-running speculation that he would move to LA but he did not even set up a meeting with the club.

Anthony Davis, who has been strongly linked with a move to the Lakers, should take note.

His future with the New Orleans Pelicans is the subject of renewed speculation, with James recently speaking of his enthusiasm for forging a partnership with the 25-year-old power forward.

Davis had 34 points and 26 rebounds but was unable to prevent New Orleans from slipping to a 126-121 defeat at the Brooklyn Nets.

His team fell to 17-22, after an eighth loss in 11 games, and are one place off the bottom in the West.

His haul of rebounds beat his own single-game record of 22 from January 2017, and was more than the rest of the team managed together (15). AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



The Thunder's Paul George manages to dunk the ball against the Lakers at Staples Centre on Wednesday but is called for a technical foul. He scored 13 two-pointers out of 18 to make up for many long-range misses. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



Serena Williams won all her singles matches at the mixed-team Hopman Cup in Perth as she prepares her bid for a 24th Grand Slam singles title. PHOTO: EPA-EFE

Williams happy with Hopman tune-up

PERTH • Serena Williams completed a sweep of her singles matches at the mixed-team Hopman Cup yesterday as she readies a bid to join Margaret Court on 24 Grand Slam singles titles at the Australian Open.

She was made to work a little harder than expected by young Briton Katie Boulter in the United States' final Group B tie but prevailed in straight sets to make it three wins from as many outings.

But, in what could be her last Cup, it was not enough for the two-time winner and the 20-year-old Frances Tiafoe. They were eliminated after their opening two losses while defending champions

Switzerland have booked their place in tomorrow's final.

The 37-year-old, watched by her daughter Alexis Olympia born in late 2017, beat the 97th-ranked Boulter 6-1, 7-6 (7-2) following wins over former top 10 player Belinda Bencic and Greece's Maria Sakkari earlier in the week.

"It was perfect, it's just like this in Melbourne," the 16th-ranked Williams said. "It's the exact same sun and it gives me so many problems. After you serve, you are blind for the next two points."

She has not won a Slam since the Australian Open in 2017 and was beaten last year in the finals of Wimbledon and US Open, where she

fired a furious tirade at the umpire during her loss to Naomi Osaka.

In Perth, she dropped just one set in her singles matches although, at different times, she seemed to be troubled by a right shoulder problem and had both ankles strapped.

Her form was patchy across the matches, but she said the round-robin format was ideal preparation.

In the men's singles, the struggling Tiafoe led 5-3 in the first set, but won just one more game in losing 7-6 (7-4), 6-0 to Cameron Norrie. The Britons claimed the tie with victory in the Fast4 mixed doubles 3-4 (2-5), 4-3 (5-4), 4-1.

At the Brisbane International, world No. 5 Naomi Osaka came

from behind to beat Anastasija Sevastova 3-6, 6-0, 6-4 to reach the semi-finals of the season-opening event.

The 21-year-old Japanese has enormous power but said she was tested by the Latvian, who defeated her twice last year and favours angles and deception over brute force.

Osaka next plays Lesia Tsurenko and, with defending champion Elina Svitolina ousted on Wednesday, is now the firm title favourite. AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

HOPMAN CUP
France v Spain: Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 9.45am
Australia v Germany: 5.15pm

Pujara century gives India fine start in final Test

SYDNEY • Cheteshwar Pujara put Australia to the sword with an unbeaten 130 in India's 303 for four on the opening day of the fourth Test yesterday, keeping the tourists firmly on track for a historic win with his third century of the series.

The hosts, desperately scrapping to avoid being the first Australia

team to lose a series to India on home soil, had their successes and managed to dislodge Mayank Agarwal after a bright 77, Virat Kohli for 23 and Ajinkya Rahane for 18.

Pujara, however, would just not budge and eked out his innings at a rate of little more than a run every other ball to take his series tally to 458 and add another ton to those

that helped India to wins in Adelaide and Melbourne.

Those victories to Australia's one win in Perth means India need to only avoid defeat at the Sydney Cricket Ground to secure a maiden Test series win since they began touring Down Under in 1947-48.

Again India's rock, Pujara put together 116 with Agarwal, 54 with Kohli, 48 with Rahane and finished the day with an unbroken stand of 75 with Hanuma Vihari.

"It's great to watch him from the other end, the way he grinds the bowlers," Agarwal said of Pujara. "We're very happy. We would

have liked to be probably three down but 300 for four on the first day after choosing to bat, I think we're in a great position."

India have never lost a Test when Kohli has won the toss, winning 18 and drawing three, and it could prove decisive on a pitch expected to be conducive to spin as it wears.

"He was classy, wasn't he? His time, his patience, he was just very good," said Australia batsman Marcus Labuschagne, whose spin bowling took a battering from Pujara.

"That's what we need to be to put a big score on the board." REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

A game of two halves

ST correspondent Sazali Abdul Aziz and host Jonathan Roberts discuss whether Liverpool can lift the EPL trophy while looking ahead to the year in sport: <http://str.sg/060u>



Next 48 Hours

TODAY	7.30pm).
CRICKET 4th & final Test Australia v India: Day 2 (Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236, 7.30pm).	FOOTBALL AFC Asian Cup Group A: UAE v Bahrain (Singtel TV Ch114 & StarHub Ch208, 11.50pm). English FA Cup 3rd rd: Man United v Reading (8.25pm), Chelsea v Nottingham Forest (10.55pm), Blackpool v Arsenal (Sunday, 1.25am) – Singtel TV Ch111, Shrewsbury v Stoke (8.25pm), Gillingham v Cardiff (10.55pm), Newcastle v Blackburn (Sunday, 1.25am) – Ch112, West Ham v Birmingham (8.25pm), Everton v Lincoln (10.55pm), Palace v Grimsby (Sunday, 1.25am) – Ch113. Spanish LaLiga Valladolid v Rayo (7.55pm), Alaves v Valencia (11.10pm), Huesca v Betis (Sunday, 3.40am) – StarHub Ch213.
FOOTBALL English FA Cup 3rd rd: Tranmere v Tottenham (Singtel TV Ch111, tomorrow, 3.40am). Spanish LaLiga Levante v Girona (tomorrow, 2am), Espanyol v Leganes (tomorrow, 4am) – StarHub Ch213.	TENNIS Hopman Cup Group A: France v Spain (9.45am), Australia v Germany (5.15pm) – Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209. ATP Qatar Open Day 4: Doubles final (9.30pm), Singles s-finals (11.30pm) – StarHub Ch213. ATP Maharashtra Open S-finals (Ch201, 9.30pm).
TOMORROW	TENNIS Hopman Cup Final (Singtel TV Ch115 & StarHub Ch209, 5pm). ATP Maharashtra Open Final (Ch201, 7.30pm).
BASKETBALL ABL Formosa Dreamers v CLS Knights Indonesia (StarHub TV Ch202, 3pm).	Live telecast times are subject to change. For latest updates, go to singtelv.com.sg or starhubgo.com or check the on-screen TV guide.
CRICKET 4th & final Test Australia v India: Day 3 (Singtel TV Ch123 & StarHub Ch236,	

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SPORT

ITTF BEEFS UP SINGAPORE BASE

Sec-gen and staff move to new Asia-Pac office and Republic is viewed as an ideal global HQ

Nicole Chia

The International Table Tennis Federation (ITTF) moved its Asia-Pacific operations to a bigger, swankier Singapore office yesterday, and its chief executive officer Steve Dainton hinted that the Republic could have a bigger role to play in the future.

With the world governing body due to start a bidding process next month for countries to host the new "Home of Table Tennis", he believes Singapore would "fit well" for the sport's new home.

Its headquarters is currently in Lausanne, Switzerland.

According to Dainton, the attributes that would make a city a good candidate include ease of travel, employment access for foreigners and a good business environment, all of which he feels apply to Singapore.

"Most of our staff are here now so

it would definitely fit well; we moved to Singapore in 2011 because we felt it's a very central location with strong legal systems, the travel around the world from Singapore is perfect and it fits from a business environment point of view," Dainton told The Straits Times yesterday on the sidelines of the unveiling of its new Asia-Pac office at Gateway East at Beach Road.

"Changing the location of our headquarters needs approval at the annual general meeting but, if there was a country or city like Singapore that's ready to work with the ITTF to help us build that dream or ambition, we'll be ready to do that."

The ITTF last month decided at an executive committee meeting to release a bid to find the new "Home of Table Tennis", which will house its headquarters and the sport's International Centre of Excellence.

The "Home of Table Tennis" will be the centre of all things ITTF, with the core of its staff moving

there and it will also house all of the organisation's high-performance activities.

The ITTF's Asia-Pac office here, which was relocated from Toa Payoh, is already playing a bigger role with secretary-general Raul Calin and commercial staff moving to Singapore.

Describing this move as a "pivotal moment" for the ITTF, Dainton said: "While the previous offices in Singapore have been very functional, we want to upgrade to something a bit more professional and corporate to fit in line with the new vision and more commercial approach that we want for the sport."

"We found it better to have our media, marketing and our competition staff all located in one spot and connected to the commercial business, which is largely centred on Asia."

The Australian also explained that the ITTF had modernised its staffing structure to "try and be less federation-style, and be more commercial style".

He added: "We are a core Olympic sport and have a very historical and long tradition as an inter-



International Table Tennis Federation CEO Steve Dainton with Chinese businessman Frank Ji, whose shipping company Seamaster is a major sponsor of world table tennis, at the opening of the ITTF's new Asia-Pac office in Singapore.

ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

national federation (since 1926), but we have to try to adapt in today's world, which is very much about business and commercial success for sport.

"This is the real shift we're trying to make - to go from being not just about rules and governance, but also to be very successful on the commercial side to see how we can merge those two."

Singapore Table Tennis Association president Ellen Lee, who attended yesterday's launch, believes that having the Republic house the "Home of Table Tennis" would

bring "a lot of vibrancy to Singapore and to the sport itself".

Sport Singapore chief executive officer Lim Teck Yin, who was also present, said: "We know that table tennis is very popular in Singapore, we know that we've tasted success at the Olympic level and there's a lot of news about developing local interest and local-born talent."


"I think if our strategic interests align with the overall interests of the ITTF, we can certainly have that conversation."

cnicole@sph.com.sg

Obituaries

FOR BOOKINGS AND ENQUIRIES, call 1800-289-9988 or 6319-5192

Jesus, I Trust In You



Orial Camela Lee (Sally)
Age: 86

Was called home to the Lord on 3 January 2019. Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Joseph Andrew Lee (deceased)
Brother: Derrick Filmer
Sister: Audrey Stewart
Children: Mary, Jacinta, Clement, Fintan, Edwin, Marlene
Spouses: Eric, Jeanne, Marion (Partner)


Grandchildren & Spouses, Great-Grandchildren, Caregiver Caroline, all Relatives and Friends.

Wake at Church of St Stephen, Prayer Room 1, 30 Sallim Road, Singapore 387639.

Nightly prayers will be held at 7.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Sunday 6 January 2019 at 1.00pm for Funeral Mass at Novena Church, 300 Thomson Road, Singapore 307653 at 1.30pm, thereafter to Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 3.30pm.

"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" - Psalm 23:6



Anthony Mark Wing Wah
22 Oct 1935 - 2 Jan 2019

Dad, you held our hand when we were small, you caught us when we fell. You're the hero of our childhood and our later years as well. Every time we think of you, our heart still fills with pride. Though we'll always miss you Dad, we know you're by our side. In laughter and in sorrow, in sunshine and through rain, we know you're watching over us, until we meet again. We love you Dad!

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Wives: Mary Tai (Deceased), Angie Tai
Daughters: Jennifer Mark, Douglas Lim, Juliana Mark, Ang Kian Sen
Sons-in-law: Vincent Mark, Faith Ng
Grandchildren: Gerard Lim, Ian Lim, Darren Ang, Rachel Ang, Colin Lim, Nowellus Mark, Ignatius Mark & Emma Mark.

And all relatives and friends.

Wake is held at **Bik 702, Bedok Reservoir Road, Singapore 470702.**

Nightly prayers will be held at 8.30pm.

Cortege leaves on Monday 7 January 2019 at 10.45am for Funeral Mass at Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour 31 Siglap Hill, Singapore 456085, 11.15am, thereafter to Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 1pm.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Psalm 23:6



Agatha Ng Ah Teh
Age: 83

Was called home to be with the Lord on 2 January 2019. Dearly missed and fondly remembered by loved ones.

Husband: Peter Chai Jong Sing (†)

Children: Ivy Chai Li Yin, Maria Chai Chin Hwa, Joseph Chai Kim Joo, Magdalene Chai Yong Hwa, Mary Chai Tzy Wah, Agatha Chai Tzy Chuey

Spouses: Chue Yie Heng, George Wee, Angie Ng Soo Chin

Isidore Han Peng Yong, Daniel Quah Chuan Hoe

Spouses: Clarence Choo Hai Leng, Rodrigues Averyl Christine, Gopal Felicia E-Ling

Great Grandchildren: Zen Chey Kei Han, Zendus Choo Wee Yew, Clara Choo Lee Teng, Emma Kate Chue, Oliver Clark Chue, Aurea Felicity Chai Si Rui


Caregiver: Yana

And all relatives and friends.

Wake at Block 103 Edgefield Plains (Multi Purpose Hall), Singapore 820103.

Nightly prayers will be held at 8.00pm.

Cortege leaves on Saturday 5 January 2019 at 1.15pm for Funeral Mass at St Anne's Church, 66 Sengkang East Way, Singapore 548593 at 1.30pm, thereafter to Mandai Crematorium Hall 3 for cremation at 3.00pm.



Gurunathan Pathumavathy Pillai (Shamala)
(d/o late Mr & Mrs V. Gurunathan Pillai)
Age: 58


Passed away peacefully on 3 January 2019.

Sadly missed by brothers, sisters, brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, nephews, nieces, grandchildren, all relatives and friends.

She is resting at Block 37 Sin Ming Drive, #01-579, Singapore 575711.

Cortege leaves on Friday 4 January 2019 at 3.30pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 1 for cremation at 4.15pm.

Tel: 9337 7134 (Sri) 9185 4399 (Guna)



Masillamany s/o Munusamy Ex SIAEC Staff
Age: 71

Passed away peacefully on 3 January 2019, dearly missed and remembered by loved ones.

Wife: Patmah Vadi

Daughters & Sons-in-law: Kokilavani & Paramasivan Tamarai Rani & Navin Ganesh

Son: Harendran


Grandchildren, all relatives and friends.

Dad is resting at Block 569A Champions Way, Singapore 731569.


Cortege leaves on Friday 4 January 2019 at 3.30pm for Mandai Crematorium Hall 4 for cremation at 5.00pm.

Tel: 8121 9019 / 9138 2009

IN PRECIOUS MEMORY OF



TAN AH TAH
Departed: 21st Nov 2001




WONG SIEW YONG
Departed: 4th Jan 1984

Rest in peace, dear loving mother, Thirty-five long years have passed away; You are gone, but still are living in the hearts of those who stay.

Dearly missed & always remembered by: Son, Daughter-In-Law, Daughters, Son-In-Law, Grandson, Grand-Daughter-in-law, Grand-Daughters, Relatives and All Loved Ones.

In Everloving Memory of



RAMASAMY KULANTHAIVELU KALIAMMAL W/O KULANTHAIVELU
Departed 4/1/97

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Fondly remembered by family.

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"In memoriam" is for the loved ones whom you remember...



And in the sweetness of friendship let there be laughter, and the sharing of pleasures. For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed.

Kahlil Gibran

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Ng Liang Chiap
Departed on 4 January 2017

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by family and all loved ones.

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It Girl spills all

Social-media influencer Kim Lim opens up about self-harm, her parents' painful divorce and becoming a mother. **D2&3**

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Satin crepe jumpsuit with halter neck tie and front keyhole, by Diane Von Furstenberg

Satin ankle strap stiletto heels with peony flower appliqué, by Giuseppe Zanotti

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Roving | 1:30pm

Lion Dance & Drums Performances
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[1] Atrium | 3:08pm

Richard Orlinski Exhibition by Galeries Bartoux
3 January - 3 February 2019 | 11 Atrium

An Abundance of Fortune & Prosperity with PUTIEN
10 - 12 January 2019 | B4 ION Station

Triumph Festive Pop-up
14 – 20 January 2019 | B4 ION Station

Reunite: Young Talent Programme
(Presented by ION Art and Affordable Art Fair)
18 – 27 January 2019 | ION Art

Homecoming 2019 by Chubby Chubby
24 January - 3 February 2019 | B4 ION Station

Singapore Art Society Annual Exhibition
(In celebration of Lunar New Year 2019)
1 – 10 February 2019 | ION Art

Michael Khoo: 80 Years Dance with the Art
15 – 19 February 2019 | ION Art

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Kim Lim at Hotel Football, where her family has a private suite. The hotel is next door to Manchester United's Old Trafford football stadium. PHOTO: MARK LAW

Keeping up with Kim

She may be home-grown billionaire Peter Lim's daughter, but Kim Lim says she has had to work for what she wants

Sylvester Ng

In public, Kim Lim is always sparkling and stylish, with a cluster of Cartier Love and Juste un Clou bracelets on her arm.

Asked if they have a special meaning, she says with a smile: "I usually go out without much jewellery, I just like to stack different bracelets."

But beyond being accessories, the bracelets are also a cover.

When she removes them, her wrist is encircled with scars. They are old wounds, each scar a record of her little-known past.

At the lowest point of her life, she says she tried to do "stupid things", without elaborating further.

It is a past she rarely talks about. She says she decided to open up because many young girls these days battle depression and she hopes they will not take the same self-destructive path.

Lim is 27 and the daughter of Singaporean business magnate Peter Lim. One of Singapore's most successful stockbrokers, he switched to being a full-time investor in 1996. In the 2018 Forbes list of Singapore's richest people, he ranked 12th with a net worth of \$2.4 billion. His companies and commercial interests include Thomson Medical Group, Valencia CF, footballer Cristiano Ronaldo's portrait rights and Hotel Football, which is next door to Manchester United's Old Trafford football stadium.

When she was four years old, her parents parted ways. It was one of the longest divorce cases in Singapore, lasting more than seven years.

Recalling that time, Kim Lim's eyes well up with tears. She says: "That's the darkest period of my

life. I remember when I was in primary school, my brother and I would shuttle between our parents every two to three days."

After primary school, her parents sent her to boarding school in England to make her more independent. She spent four years at Queenswood School. She returned at age 16 and attended Anglo-Chinese School (Independent), Hwa Chong International School and the Singapore Institute of Management.

Many would think that as a rich man's daughter, she is able to have everything her heart desires and enjoy a life without worries. But Lim disagrees.

She says: "I've never felt I was different from other children. My father is very strict with me. We live a simple life, such as going to the hawker centre to eat his favourite mee siam. As a kid, I didn't have many luxuries. He always told me that whatever I want, I have to get it myself."

This is advice that she has taken to heart, at least in her love life. When it comes to love, she believes in destiny, love at first sight and being a go-getter.

Lim laughs like a little girl as she says: "I met my husband in a temple in Thailand, I guess that's destiny." The devout Buddhist regularly visits Thai temples and believes in fate.

"I was drawn to his tall frame and his 'bad boy' vibe. I later found out he was my assistant's friend. We dated for half a year and, in a flash, we had registered our marriage."

Continuing with a laugh, she adds: "Our personalities are completely different. He's very low-key. He's older than me by one year, but is completely uninterested in social media. Before we met, he didn't even have an Instagram account. He set one up later just so he could follow me on social media."

"When it comes to how we deal with things, I'm more impulsive, he's more calm and rational. Maybe it's because we're different that we're attracted to each other. I feel grounded when I'm with him."

I've never felt I was different from other children. My father is very strict with me. We live a simple life, such as going to the hawker centre to eat his favourite mee siam. As a kid, I didn't have many luxuries. He always told me that whatever I want, I have to get it myself.



KIM LIM on her father, business magnate Peter Lim

This is the first time she has shared her love story with the media.

In 2016, she was rumoured to be dating Macau casino tycoon Stanley Ho's son Mario Ho. Both shared photos of themselves exchanging rings and kissing in Paris on their social media accounts. It was widely reported by the press.

Asked about it now, she says: "We were together for half a year. But because we lived in different cities, it was hard to maintain a long-distance relationship. Over time, we drifted apart."

There were also rumours of a romantic relationship with K-pop boyband BigBang's Seungri.

She dismisses it with a laugh: "We've always been good friends."

Interestingly, while her romances were widely talked about, few knew about her marriage registration. The ceremony was very simple, with only family members by her side.

She says: "Once you've found the right person, why wait?"

As for the wedding ceremony, she says it keeps getting delayed. It was planned for March 23 last year and invitations had been sent out, but midway, she got pregnant.

After her delivery, she planned to hold a "wedding of the century" at the end of 2018, but that got derailed again as she "had not attained her ideal figure".

Lim is the spokesman for Cambridge Therapeutics slimming salon and apparently goes there for at least three sessions a week to achieve her "ideal wedding figure".

Now that she has a son, Kyden, her life has undergone a 180-degree change.

Previously, she would pack her bags and jet off wherever she fancied. Now, she puts him first before her trips. On this 10-day-plus Europe trip, she would often FaceTime the one-year-old to see what he was up to on the other side of the world.

Lim also invited us to her father's holiday home in Manchester, letting us spend 48 hours with her there.

Her football-loving father's holiday home is on the sixth floor of Hotel Football. Manchester United is one of his favourite teams and he often visits Manchester to watch games and has his own private room at Old Trafford.

A few years ago, he and football players Gary Neville and Ryan Giggs invested in the hotel, which was officially opened in 2015. On the sixth floor, there is a row of rooms without numbers that is Peter Lim's private suite – and also home to Kim Lim and her younger brother in Manchester. He chose to have his suite on the sixth rather than top floor because the windows look out directly to the Manchester United logo, a dream view for a super football fan.

The suite has an open kitchen, living room and bedroom, with floor-to-ceiling views of the neighbouring stadium. On the top floor of the hotel is an indoor football field with a 360-degree view of Manchester.

After becoming a mother, Kim Lim says she has started doing charity work for kids.

Recently, she took more than 100 underprivileged children to The Great Moscow Circus, hoping to bring more smiles into their lives. She also went to Mongolia before the arrival of winter to deliver gers (Mongolian yurts) to homeless children there, hoping to provide some shelter from the cold.

She says: "With a mother-in-law, father, husband and son who love me, everything is perfect. I don't really need anything else."

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• This article first appeared in the December 2018 issue of Icon. Go to www.IconSingapore.com for more exclusive videos of Kim Lim at her family home in Manchester, boarding school in Hertfordshire and with the Valencia CF team at Mestalla Stadium.

SHE HAS 238,000 FOLLOWERS, BUT NOT MORE THAN FIVE TRUE FRIENDS ON D3

Minutes&Seconds

Chanel gets serious about time

The French luxury house started making watches only 30 years ago, but its time-pieces now stand with the best in the world

Wong Kim Hoh



Mr. Frederic Grangie (left) is sitting in the cavernous and tastefully appointed Chanel boutique in Marina Bay Sands and holding up a Code Coco, a head-turning fashion watch by the luxury brand.

“Honestly,” says the president of Chanel’s Watches And Fine Jewellery division with a shrug of his elegant shoulders, “nobody needs another watch”.

“But it’s not about need, it’s about desirability, and you need to create that. It’s extremely important to bring the greatest creations to the market with the highest levels of watch-making.”

He looks lovingly at the piece in his hand, inspired by the clasp of the iconic Chanel 2.55 handbag.

The Code Coco is a black beauty, with a bracelet fashioned from beads of high-tech black ceramic that drapes fluidly around the wrist. It boasts two dials in black lacquer, separated by a cylindrical closing mechanism and framed by a bezel inlaid with diamonds.

It is as much a watch as it is a piece of jewellery.

“This is about our capacity to produce a mechanical jewel. It was extremely difficult to make. And I wasn’t ready to release it until it was perfect,” says Mr Grangie.

By his own admission, Chanel is a “baby” in the watchmaking world.

Although the French powerhouse – famous for its women’s fashion, accessories and luxury goods – has



French actor Gaspard Ulliel, face of Bleu De Chanel, wears a Monsieur de Chanel watch, which sports a Calibre 1 movement.

French actress, singer and Chanel ambassador Alma Jodorowsky (left) with a Code Coco watch. PHOTOS: CHANEL

been around for more than a century, it started making timepieces only three decades ago.

“At the same time, if I look at all the creations that Chanel has brought to the market in 30 years, I’d have to say it is quite an achievement. We even have an absolute icon in the J12,” he says, referring to the house’s famous range of unisex watches.

Launched in 2000 in black titanium-infused ceramic, it was designed by Chanel’s late artistic director Jacques Helleu and became an instant commercial and design sensation.

It has since spawned other iterations including the J12 Tourbillon, which has a hand-wound mechanical tourbillon movement and a groundbreaking ceramic main plate.

By any measure, Chanel has been extremely strategic in its bid to become a legitimate watchmaker.

In 1993, it invested in watch assembly plant G&F Chatelain in La Chaux-de-Fonds, the cradle of Swiss watchmaking.

Among others, Chatelain supplies components to the likes of Bell & Ross, Richard Mille and MB&F.

A few years later, it set up a division to manufacture movements for Chanel.

In 2016, Chanel debuted the Calibre 1, its first in-house haute horlogerie movement designed, developed and manufactured in partnership with famed independent watchmaker Romain Gauthier.

Boasting a jump hour complication, it became the heart of the Monsieur de Chanel, the brand’s first men’s watch.

This was followed by the Calibre 2 the following year, housed in the exquisite Premiere Camelia Skeleton Watch.

With a skeletonised movement framed in a camelia flower, this jewelled timepiece bagged the Ladies’ prize at the 2017 Grand Prix d’Horlogerie de Geneve (GPHG), the Oscars of the watchmaking world.

Calibre 3 came out last year, fitted into the case of the Boy.Friend, a popular timepiece which was released in 2015.

The Boy.Friend Skeleton watch again won in the Ladies category in the GPHG last November, making it the house’s fifth triumph at the awards.

If that is not validation enough, the luxury group’s latest move to up its horological game came last September when it took a 20 per cent stake in F.P. Journe, the luxury watchmaking brand helmed by acclaimed horologist Francois-Paul Journe.

It was not its first investment in other watch brands; Chanel also invested in Bell & Ross in 1998 and Romain Gauthier in 2011.

The F.P. Journe investment, says Mr Grangie, is sound on at least two levels.

“One, we want to ensure that F.P. Journe will continue forever, now that Chanel is behind it,” he says of the exclusive brand which makes only 900 pieces a year.

“But more importantly, there’s a lot we can learn from each other. In watchmaking, F.P. Journe is the ultimate living master.

“There will be constant conversa-

tions between us which will make us grow. The relationship will grow organically, there is no business plan behind this,” he adds.

The chatty and affable Frenchman, who has a master’s in luxury and fashion products marketing from the Institut Supérieur de Marketing du Luxe in Paris in addition to an Insead MBA, says his work is cut out for him.

“I want to do many things in the future. But my main job is to bring our creations to the market without compromise,” says Mr Grangie, who joined Chanel in 2016 after proving his mettle in senior positions at Louis Vuitton and Marc Jacobs.

Chanel, he says, is a unique watchmaker because design takes precedence over other considerations.

“The art of watchmaking is here to sell the design when normally it is the opposite.

“Usually, you create a stunning complication and then you encase it. We start with the design and say: ‘Whatever the complication, it needs to look like this.’”

“That’s why we need the in-house capability to create complications. If you do this outside and go to prestigious houses and say: ‘This is what we want, nothing else,’ they would go: ‘That’s not how we work.’”

The brand’s steadfast adherence to purity of design, purpose and the personal touch, he says, also explains why Chanel will not be trotting out a connected watch or jumping on the e-commerce bandwagon anytime soon.

“When people ask me when the Chanel connected watch is coming, my answer is: ‘We will not do it just because everybody does it.’ Unless it serves a creation and has a real purpose, we will not do it.”

The same goes for e-commerce.

“The personal connection and touch is important in anything we do. That’s what the brand stands for. But that doesn’t mean we are not active on social media and in the digital world.”

He says 2019 will be an important year for Chanel as it goes back to the watch which changed everything for it.

“The focus will be on the J12.”

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FROM D2

She has 238,000 followers, but not more than five true friends

Sylvester Ng

As we travelled to different European cities for the photoshoot with Kim Lim, she took on the role of a big sister, always giving suggestions of the best places to eat.

This is why, when we were in London, we ended up in the city’s hottest restaurant, Novikov, as well as her family’s favourite, Orient London. And in Manchester, she made reservations at Menagerie, a restaurant popular with the city’s footballers, well before our plane touched down.

Lim says her father is the one who taught her to be hospitable and gracious. “As a child, whenever I went out with my dad and his friends, I would see that he treats them with so much sincere hospitality. I think sharing things that I like with my friends is so much more fun than enjoying these things on my own.”

Of course, she is aware that there are those who befriend her only for networking purposes or even to take advantage of her.

But she says: “If I am being taken advantage of, to a certain extent, I really do not mind.” She insists there is no need to be calculative

over many little things in life.

Once, when she found out that a trusted friend had been stealing money from her wallet, she stopped hanging out with the friend and never asked about the money. She saw it as having paid “school fees” to learn the truth about a person.

Lim is an influencer with 238,000 followers on Instagram, so I ask her if she has that many friends in real life.

She says with a laugh that the case is entirely opposite. There are not more than five friends whom she can really talk to or who will help her in an emergency.

She adds: “You have a lot of fake ‘friends’ on social media. They will like your photos or sometimes leave comments, but as soon as a prettier or fresher face appears, they will have an immediate change of heart and move the focus onto someone else. This is reality.”

While she was pregnant, she disappeared for nearly nine months on social media. She says: “Pregnancy is a very private matter – I wanted to share this experience only with my family and my husband and not let people on social media comment about it.”

During her disappearance, she

A person can have hundreds of thousands of ‘friends’ on social media, but more importantly, it is about finding a few true friends in real life.



KIM LIM (below, with her son Kyden)



ST PHOTO: SEAH KWANG PENG

lost many followers – not that she minds. All she wanted to do at the time was take care of her baby and enjoy the pregnancy process with her husband.

Lim also sets boundaries for herself. She never posts photos of her home or her kid’s face. She explains: “That is for safety concerns.”

Reportedly, in the 2014 case where the elderly mother of Sheng Siong supermarket boss Lim Hock Chee was kidnapped, the defendant revealed that his first choice had been Lim and her younger brother. This is why when it comes to sharing details of her life, she has always chosen to be more conservative.

Up till now, she has never shared photos of her one-year-old son Kyden’s face on social media. Even when she held the 99-day celebration for her son at Ritz Carlton, she made a note on the invitation card for guests to refrain from sharing photos of him on social media.

She says: “I don’t want him to be moulded into an influencer baby when he is still so young, it would be too unfair to him. If he wishes to be an influencer when he grows up, then I will encourage him, because that would be his own decision.”

Many fashion, beauty and jew-

ellery brands promote their products through her social media platforms, although she insists on working only with brands she likes.

She also hopes to use her social media influence for good and encourage more young people to lend a helping hand to the elderly, children and stray cats and dogs.

Since most of her income comes from being an influencer, I ask if she is worried about the day when social media is no longer trendy and what her plans would be if the influencer business is over.

It turns out that she has seen this coming for a long time.

She says: “I have given myself a deadline – I will quit this industry after I’m 30, so I can focus on working with my brother to help our father manage his businesses. After all, that is more practical. So during this time, I will work hard to fight for my own career and hopefully make a name for myself.”

• This article first appeared in the December 2018 issue of Icon. Go to www.IconSingapore.com for more exclusive videos of Kim Lim at her family home in Manchester, boarding school in Hertfordshire and with the Valencia CF team at Mestalla Stadium.

Gigs Picks

Anjali Raguraman recommends



KYLE PRESENTED BY COLLECTIVE MINDS

American rapper Kyle (above) stops by Singapore as part of his Lightspeed World Tour, off the release of his debut album Light Of Mine.

Best known for his feel-good tracks such as iSpy, he will be accompanied by a full live band for his show here.

Singapore rapper TheLionCityBoy and DJ Prav of hip-hop collective .Wav(y), are set to open for him.

WHERE: Esplanade Annexe Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade **WHEN:** Tonight, 8 to 11pm (doors open at 7.30pm) **ADMISSION:** From \$60 for advance tickets to \$200 for a bundle of four tickets, via igo.events



SGMUSO PRESENTS: THE OUTER LIMITS

Some of Singapore's finest music acts will perform at SGMUSO's (The Music Society, Singapore) fundraiser, which aims to raise \$70,000 for promoting and developing the local music scene through workshops, networking sessions and other initiatives. The festival will feature

up-and-comers Yao and Houg as well as comeback bands A Vacant Affair and West Grand Boulevard, and

culminate in a projection of live visuals as headliners Linying, Seziri and Caracal (above) perform.

WHERE: *Scape The Ground Theatre, Level 2, 2 Orchard Link **MRT:** Somerset

WHEN: Tomorrow, 3 to 10pm **ADMISSION:** Tickets at \$30 via bit.ly/theouterlimitsSG. Public donations welcome via the ticketing site or www.sgmuso.org/donate

PHOTOS: CE LA VI, LEONARD SOOSAY, SYMMETRY ENTERTAINMENT, FACEBOOK/KYLE



CE LA VI PRESENTS BOB SINCLAR

Best known for chart-topping tracks Love Generation and World, Hold On (Children Of The Sky), party fixture and famed French DJ-producer Bob Sinclar (above) revisits Singapore for a sky-high set at Ce La Vi.

WHERE: Ce La Vi Club Lounge, Marina Bay Sands Tower 3, 1 Bayfront Avenue **WHEN:** Jan 25, 10pm till late **ADMISSION:** \$28 for pre-sale tickets from igo.events and \$38 at the door. Entry includes one premium pour. For table reservations, call 6508-2188 or e-mail reservation-sg@celavi.com



SUPERORGANISM – LIVE IN SINGAPORE

Viral, Britain-based indie-pop collective Superorganism (above), lead by 18-year-old Orono Noguchi on vocals, bring their brand of quirky cool tunes here. Their debut self-titled album, which came out in March last year, was named one of Rolling Stone's 50 best albums of 2018.

Expect tracks such as Everybody Wants To Be Famous and Something For Your M.I.N.D.

WHERE: The Pavilion @ Far East Square, 01-01, 28 China Street **MRT:** Telok Ayer **WHEN:** Jan 11, 7 to 9.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$75 via igo.events

GIGS

Slash Featuring Myles Kennedy And The Conspirators Live In Singapore

Grammy award-winning legendary rock icon Slash, featuring Myles Kennedy and The Conspirators, will perform in gig organiser Bandwagon's first international concert of the year. The iconic American Guns N' Roses guitarist and songwriter has amassed album sales of more than 100 million copies and been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

WHERE: The Coliseum, Hard Rock Hotel Singapore Resorts World Sentosa, 8 Sentosa Gateway **MRT:** HarbourFront **WHEN:** Jan 8, 8pm **ADMISSION:** \$148 - \$228 **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** sistic.com.sg

An Italian Extravaganza

Maestro Enrico Onofri leads re:Sound in a spectacular musical journey with works by Italian masters Dario Castello, Arcangelo Corelli, Antonio Vivaldi, Luigi Boccherini, Gioachino Rossini and Ottorino Respighi. There will also be special performances of Vivaldi's Winter featuring Chloe Chua, co-winner of the 2018 Menuhin Competition (Junior Division).

WHERE: Victoria Concert Hall, 9 Empress Place **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** Jan 13, 5 & 8.15pm **ADMISSION:** \$15 - \$38 **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** sistic.com.sg

Angela Zhang Journey World Tour

It has been three years since award-winning Taiwanese Mandopop singer Angela Zhang last held a concert in Singapore. This time, fans in Singapore can expect an even sweeter treat as the concert falls on her birthday.

WHERE: Hall 1 Singapore Expo, 1 Expo Drive **MRT:** Expo **WHEN:** Jan 19, 7pm

ADMISSION: \$108 - \$238, tickets and info at apactix.com

CHARITY

Classical Music Recital In Aid Of Pathology Research

The recital aims to raise funds for research in pathology for advancements in the diagnosis of conditions such as cancer. The concert will feature renowned Singapore violinist Loh Jun Hong, guest quartet The Libitum Quartet and doctors of SingHealth Duke NUS Pathology Academic Clinical Programme, led by Dr Jipson Quah. **WHERE:** Auditorium, L1 Academia, 20 College Road, Singapore General Hospital **MRT:** Outram Park **WHEN:** Jan 25, 7 - 9pm **ADMISSION:** \$60 (for tickets, e-mail tan.xiao.hui@sgh.com.sg); donations welcome **INFO:** www.giving.sg/sghhdf/pathacp

TALKS

Careers Connect On-the-Go

Organised by Workforce Singapore's Careers Connect, the event provides career coaching, job matching services and job search workshops for job seekers and those who are not sure how to kick-start their job search.

WHERE: 112 Katong, 112 East Coast Road **MRT:** Eunos/Dakota **WHEN:** Tomorrow & Sun, 11am - 8pm **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 6883-5885 **INFO:** adaptandgrow.sg/careersconnect

Regional Outlook Forum

The forum is Iseas - Yusof Ishak Institute's flagship event that is held annually in January. It highlights developments on the horizon that regional stakeholders, including those from the government and

private sectors, should anticipate. Scholars and analysts of international repute will provide insights to political, economic and security challenges affecting the region. **WHERE:** Island Ballroom, Shangri-La Hotel Singapore, 22 Orange Grove Road **MRT:** Stevens/Orchard **WHEN:** Jan 9, 8.30am - 5.35pm **ADMISSION:** \$400 (\$350 for five or more people); students: \$200 - \$250, e-mail rof@iseas.edu.sg (Betty Tan) to register **INFO:** iseas.edu.sg

Top 10 Travel Experiences For 2019

Discover more travel destinations and experiences for the year ahead with The Straits Times travel writer Lee Siew Hwa. Her travels have taken her to all seven continents and she has written stories on Antarctica, a great white shark cage-dive in Australia and a road trip to the far western edge of China. She has also written on politics and religion as a senior writer and columnist. Previously based in Washington, she also established the paper's United States Bureau and later joined the World Bank as a consultant. She has also worked in Bangkok as a foreign correspondent. **WHERE:** Programme Zone, Central Public Library, National Library, 100 Victoria Street **MRT:** City Hall/Bugis **WHEN:** Jan 25, 7 - 8pm (registration starts at 6pm) **ADMISSION:** Free, register and info at str.sg/askSiewHua2

CLASSES

SGPY Photography Workshop By Nikon

In conjunction with the Singapore Garden Photographer of the Year (SGPY) 2019, Nikon Singapore and NParks are organising a series of hands-on photography workshops. Mr Larry Haydn, a professional photographer and an MOE-registered

instructor will conduct the third workshop in the series. **WHERE:** Galeri Utama, The Foothills, Fort Canning Park **MRT:** Fort Canning **WHEN:** Jan 19, 9am - noon **ADMISSION:** Free, register at nparks.gov.sg **TEL:** 6471-7844 **INFO:** gervais_lee@nparks.gov.sg

Native Plants Workshop (Gardening Workshop)

Professional gardeners and hobbyists can be spared much misery and frustration by choosing plants that are well-adapted to the local climate. Singapore has a record of over 2,000 native plant species within its boundaries, some with ornamental values. Plants that are native to our region are naturally adapted to our hot and humid environment, making them potentially easier to care for. **WHERE:** Classrooms 1 & 2, L3 Botany Centre, Singapore Botanic Gardens **MRT:** Botanic Gardens **WHEN:** Jan 19, 10am - 1pm **ADMISSION:** \$50 a person, sign up at nparks.gov.sg **TEL:** 6471-9961 **INFO:** E-mail nparks_sbg_edu@nparks.gov.sg

Exploring Art In The CBD

Do you know that there is an artistic side to the Central Business District (CBD)? Sign up for the Singapore Chinese Cultural Centre's (SCCC) CBD Arts Trail to discover the various art pieces and installations that often go unnoticed amid the hustle and bustle of the district. You will discover works by local artists and installations by foreign sculptors Kurt Laurenz Metzler and Gao Xiaowu. **WHERE:** L1SCCC Ho Bee Concourse, 1 Straits Boulevard **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Jan 19 & 26, 5 - 6.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$5 a person, register at singaporeccc.org.sg **TEL:** 6812-7222 **INFO:** enquiries@singaporeccc.org.sg

Workshop By Urban Artist, ANTZ

Explore spray painting with local urban artist ANTZ and learn how he

creates contemporary artwork based on traditional Chinese themes and visuals.

WHERE: L6 SCCC Zhong Sheng Jian Recital Studio, 1 Straits Boulevard **MRT:** Tanjong Pagar **WHEN:** Jan 20, 2 - 5pm **ADMISSION:** \$5 a person, register at eventbrite.sg **TEL:** 6812-7222 **INFO:** enquiries@singaporeccc.org.sg

SPORTS

SMBC Singapore Open Golf Tournament

The US\$1 million (\$1.37 million) tournament will feature players such as defending champion Sergio Garcia from Spain, who played a starring role for Europe in this year's Ryder Cup and American golf legend Davis Love III, as well as top golfers from the Asian and Japan Tours.

WHERE: Serapong Course, Sentosa Golf Club, 27 Bukit Manis Road **MRT:** HarbourFront **WHEN:** Jan 17 - 20, from 7am **ADMISSION:** \$20 - \$30 (season: \$60); VIP \$450 - \$700 (season: \$1,800), tickets and info from apactix.com

Stadium/Kids Spartan Race

The Spartan Race is one of the world's best obstacle course race, with more than 240 races in 25 countries around the world. The Stadium race is run over 5km with 20 obstacles, while the Kids Race will be between 800m (four to six years old) and 3.2km (10 to 13 years old). Family packages are available.

WHERE: National Stadium, Singapore Sports Hub, 1 Stadium Drive **MRT:** Stadium **WHEN:** Jan 26, from 7.30am **ADMISSION:** Stadium: \$165 - \$175; Kids Race: \$80; parent & child: \$208; register at spartanrace.sg **INFO:** info@sg.spartan.com



FoodPicks

Wong Ah Yoke
Food Critic
recommends

BREAKFAST HAWKER SPREAD
AT LOBBY LOUNGE

I love the hawker dishes that are part of the Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore's Lobby Lounge lunch buffet, especially the bak chor mee and beef rendang. So when it started a similar concept for breakfast on weekends, I could not wait to check it out.

There are six hawker dishes which you can order a la carte or as part of a semi-buffet priced at \$29.50 a person. The semi-buffet includes items such as soon kueh, chwee kueh and chee cheong fun, but you

can choose only one main hawker dish.

The hawker dishes are different from what you find at lunch, with lighter fare that is supposedly more suitable for breakfast – although I think that many Singaporeans would not think twice about eating most of these at any time of the day.

The most obvious breakfast item is Soft-Boiled Eggs With Kaya Toast (\$12), with a delicious kaya from a recipe by the hotel's executive chef. Just enough is spread on the toast to balance a thin slice of butter between the bread slices.

The Fried Carrot Cake (\$12) is pretty good too. Also created in-house, it is the old-fashioned type with pieces of rice cake fried with sticky dark soya sauce and bits of pickled radish. It is delicious when eaten hot from the wok.

Roti Prata With Dhalcha And Fish Curry (above, \$12) comes from Springleaf Prata Place near Upper Thomson Road. It is not as crisp or fluffy as some roti prata I have eaten, but is pretty good nonetheless. The fish curry, which is flavourful but not overly fiery, is a winner.

Nasi Lemak (\$19) comes from The Coconut Club in Ann Siang Hill. The rice has a slight whiff of coconut milk fragrance – which I could not detect when I ate the dish at the original restaurant – but overall, the nasi lemak is decent, not outstanding.

WHERE: The Lobby Lounge, Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore, 22 Orange Grove Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays, 7 to 11am **PRICE:** Buffet is \$29.50 for adults, \$14.75 for children

DELICIOUS \$35 SPANISH SET LUNCH

La Cala, the Spanish restaurant at Duo Galleria near Beach Road, offers a good-value three-course set lunch at \$35 nett.

There are three choices for starters and five choices for mains, but dessert is fixed.

The starters are the most impressive, especially the Chicken Cannelloni With Bechamel And Parmigiano Cheese. You get three cannelloni (pasta rolls filled with minced chicken), which is generous for a starter, baked in a delicious creamy, cheesy sauce.

Poached Egg With Parmentiere And Button Mushroom Cream is yummy too. It is like a thick and creamy mushroom soup, with bits of potato in it and a poached egg in the centre.

Among the main courses, my vote goes to Mushrooms Paella (below), which looks simple with just pieces of champignon on a layer of rice, but hidden among the grains are chopped pieces of mushroom as well. The rice, cooked perfectly till it has just a bit of bite left, is really flavourful.

Meatballs With Baby Calamari And Potatoes is delicious too, though the serving could be bigger.

The sole dessert, Char-grilled Pineapple With Toffee Sauce, Crumbles And Vanilla Ice Cream, is pretty good, so I have no complaints there.

If you are dining in a group, I would suggest you order different dishes and share everything. That way, you get to try more items and, because serving sizes can be quite different, everyone gets enough to eat.

WHERE: La Cala, 01-40/43 Duo Galleria, 7 Fraser Street **MRT:** Bugis **WHEN:** Set lunch available on Mondays to Saturdays, 11.30am to 2.30pm **PRICE:** \$35 nett, includes coffee or tea **TEL:** 6282-9200



PHOTOS:
HOTOTOGISU
RAMEN:
MDM LING
BAKERY;
SHANGRI-LA
HOTEL,
SINGAPORE;
WONG AH YOKE

RAMEN GETS OYSTER BOOST

Konjiki Hototogisu, the one-Michelin-starred ramen shop in Tokyo, already has one outlet here at Chijmes serving noodles in a delectable clam broth.

Last month, a second outlet opened at Great World City, but the noodles here come in an oyster consomme instead – a new flavour that is not available at any of its other outlets, including in Tokyo.

There are no actual oysters, but the flavour gets a boost from an oyster paste created by chef-owner Atsushi Yamamoto. It is added to the noodles as a topping and you can taste the broth before stirring it in to see what difference it makes.

I find the soup here not as sweet as the clam broth at Chijmes, but it has its own charm with deeper notes.

There are two versions available: Oyster Shio Ramen (above, \$15.90), with garlic lemon butter, red onions and oyster oil; and Oyster Paitan Ramen (\$15.90), which contains miso as well. I prefer the shio version for its cleaner and lighter taste.

The ramen comes with slices of char siu and you can top it up with side orders such as soft-boiled egg (\$2).

WHERE: Hototogisu Ramen, 01-143 Great World City, 1 Kim Seng Promenade **MRT:** Orchard **OPEN:** 11.30am to 10pm daily



RING IN CHINESE NEW YEAR
WITH THESE SNACKS

I had not heard of Mdm Ling Bakery even though it has been around since 1991, but last week, a carton of its Chinese New Year goodies landed on my office table.

It contained 12 containers of various cookies and snacks often eaten during the festival, such as pineapple balls, love letters and shrimp rolls.

The interesting thing is that each has a label that not only describes the contents, but is also printed with a different animal from the Chinese zodiac. Plus, there is a short prediction on what to expect in the coming year for those born under a particular sign. For example, green pea cookies belong to the Year of

the Rabbit and those born under that sign can expect an excellent year ahead.

The 12 types of cookies and snacks are good too, especially the premium kueh bangkit, which is light and fragrant.

The only bummer is the price, which, at \$128 for the limited-edition set, is rather high. But you can buy the snacks individually too, at prices that range from \$13.80 for the peanut cookies to \$24.80 for the cranberry florentine.

WHERE: Mdm Ling Bakery **PRICE:** From \$13.80 a can, \$128 for a set of 12 **TEL:** 8787-4142 **INFO:** E-mail hello@mdmlingbakery.com or go to www.mdmlingbakery.com

FOOD

PROMOTIONS

Osaka Cocina Nikkei Pop-Up
At Nami

Nikkei restaurant Osaka will debut its first collaboration in Asia and Singapore at Shangri-La Hotel's Nami Restaurant & Bar, which will showcase the blending of Japanese and Peruvian cultures. Osaka's Nikkei Ceviche, its take on the iconic Peruvian dish, features scallops and white fish cured with wasabi sauce. The signature Inka Nigiri Duo comprises tuna tataki and Pisco-braised pork jowl.

WHERE: Level 24 Tower Wing, Shangri-La Hotel Singapore, 22 Orange Grove Road **MRT:** Orchard/Stevens **WHEN:** Jan 21 - 27, 6 - 10pm **PRICE:** \$188++ a person, Peruvian-inspired cocktails \$24++ each **TEL:** 6213-4398 **INFO:** E-mail dining.sls@shangri-la.com

Sakuraya Student Set Meal

Fish Mart Sakuraya is offering a Students' Set (\$9.80 nett) at its outlets. The Tori Karaage Set comprises fried chicken (three pieces), California maki (four pieces) and half udon. Other sets such as Una Tama Don, Gyudon, Tendon and Tori Karaage Oyako Don come with pickles and miso soup.

WHERE (MRT): 02-01 The Seletar Mall (Sengkang, Fernvale LRT); B1-50 West Coast Plaza (Clementi); 01-32 Anchorpoint (Queenstown); B1-84D Parkway Parade (Eunos/Dakota) **WHEN:** Weekdays (except public holidays), 2.30 - 5pm **PRICE:** \$9.80 nett, dine-in only, one order a student pass **TEL:** 6214-3736 (Seletar Mall), 6773-6973 (West Coast Plaza), 6474-2495 (Anchorpoint), 6345-4714 (Parkway Parade)

CHINESE NEW YEAR

Singapore Debut For
Hock Wong Bak Kwa

Hock Wong, which began in Kuala Lumpur more than a decade ago and opened in Johor Baru in 2015, set up a factory in Singapore last year to offer its bak kwa here. Already being sold online, it will be available at pop-up stalls in some malls. For the festive season, it comes in gift boxes.

WHERE/WHEN: Pop-ups (till Feb 3) at Suntec City (from Mon), Westgate (Jan 14), VivoCity (Jan 15), Nex (Jan 17), Marina Square (Jan 18), Causeway Point & Waterway Point (both Jan 21) and Tampines Mall (Jan 23) **PRICE:** \$33 (600g) & \$49 (1kg); Bacon: \$48 (600g) & \$72 (1kg); gift boxes: \$148 (five 600g boxes) & \$245 (five 1kg boxes) **TEL:** 6904-5520 **INFO:** E-mail sales@hockwong.com.sg or go to hockwong.com.sg

Lapis, Tarts And Other CNY
Goodies From Pan Pacific

Pan Pacific Singapore's Chinese New Year goodies include a lapis selection (\$58+ - \$62+, 1kg) – Lapis Surabaya, Rainbow Kueh Lapis, Classic Kueh Lapis and Prune Kueh Lapis. The Pineapple Pastry Combination (\$58+, 18 pieces) features three flavours: traditional pineapple tart, charcoal pineapple tart with Korean yuzu tea, and Japanese matcha tarts with red bean. Other items include traditional treasure pots or pen cai (\$368+ - \$699+); yu sheng platters (\$38+ - \$198+); barbecued treats such as crispy whole suckling pig (\$338+) and roasted duck (\$78+); hampers (\$318+ - \$438+); koi nian gao (\$30.80+). **WHERE:** Pickup at Hai Tien Lo, Level 3 Pan Pacific Singapore, 7 Raffles Boulevard **MRT:** Promenade **WHEN:** Jan 21 - Feb 19, 11am - 8pm (till 5pm on Feb 4) **PRICE:** Varies **TEL:** 6826-8240 **INFO:** E-mail dining.ppsin@panpacific.com or go to pacificmarketplace.sg

New Yu Sheng Stars At Min Jiang

The Fruitful Abundance Yu Sheng with whole abalone in raspberry and sour plum sauce (\$118++ small, \$168++ large, dine-in at Min Jiang at One-North) features fruit such as peaches, dragon fruit, honeydew, mangoes and kiwi. There will be nuggets of ingot-shaped yuzu jelly with strawberries and six baby abalones topped with red tobiko to make a crown. The version at Min Jiang in Goodwood Park Hotel – Prosperity Fa Cai Yu Sheng (\$168++, large only) – is served on a plate with a drawing of eight pigs enjoying a stroll and comprises raw salmon slices, abalone and housemade bak kwa.

WHERE (MRT): Min Jiang at One-North, 5 Rochester Park (One-North); Min Jiang, Goodwood Park Hotel, 22 Scotts Road (Orchard/Newton) **WHEN:** Jan 18 - Feb 19, 11.30am - 2.30pm & 6.30 - 10.30pm **PRICE:** \$118++ - \$168++

INFO: 6774-0122 (One-North) e-mail mj1n@goodwoodparkhotel.com; 6730-1704 (Scotts Road), e-mail min_jiang@goodwoodparkhotel.com

Feast Of Abundance At Lime

Lime Restaurant's feast features dishes such as baked seabass with housemade spicy glaze, stir-fried sliced pork with leek and spicy bean sauce, drunken seafood bowl (clams, oyster, baby lobster and mussel), roasted chicken with Sichuan pepper-infused BBQ sauce, roasted beef sirloin and Lime's signature baby lobster laksa. For dinner, there are unlimited servings of baby lobster and pan-fried foie gras. The Prosperity Yusheng Platter (\$48++ - \$88++), served with fresh salmon slices, crispy fish skin and gold coin bak kwa, is complimentary for groups of at least 10 people for dinner and Super Lunch Sunday.

WHERE: Lobby level, Parkroyal on Pickering, 3 Upper Pickering Street **MRT:** Chinatown **WHEN/PRICE:** Jan 18 - Feb 19; lunch (Mon - Sat, noon - 2.30pm): \$68++ an adult/\$48++ a child; Super Lunch (Sun, 12.30 - 3.30pm): \$98++/\$58++, dinner (daily, 6.30 - 10.30pm) \$88++/\$58++ **TEL:** 6809-8899 **INFO:** E-mail lime.prsp@parkroyalhotels.com

Celebration Of Spring
At Zafferano

Zafferano's Italian Table Saturday Champagne Brunch features Chinese New Year-inspired dishes, including crispy-skinned porchetta of slow-roasted pork belly and chicken broth with tortellino, inspired by the traditional Chinese dumpling soup.

WHERE: Level 43 Ocean Financial Centre, 10 Collyer Quay **MRT:** Raffles Place **WHEN:** Jan 26, noon - 3pm **PRICE:** \$98++ - \$128++ a person **TEL:** 6509-1488 **INFO:** E-mail info@zafferano.sg

Prosperity Reunion Package
At Sheraton Towers

Families having their Chinese New Year reunion meals at Sheraton Towers can get privileges and freebies. Those who book at least five tables will enjoy free-flow soft drinks and Chinese tea (for four hours), festive cookies and nuts for the pre-event reception, waiver of corkage fee, auspicious goodie bags for all guests and an \$88 F&B voucher. A minimum booking of 15 tables gets a complimentary barrel of 22.7-litre Carlsberg draught beer, while a booking of 25 tables or more gets two complimentary barrels of beer and a weekend stay in a deluxe room with breakfast buffet for two. **WHERE:** 39 Scotts Road **MRT:** Newton **WHEN:** Jan 21 - Feb 19 **PRICE:** From \$888++ (table for 10) **TEL:** 6839-5845 **INFO:** E-mail catering@sheratonsingapore.com

Festive Dishes And Local
Favourites At Feast@East

At the Huat Ar! buffet, diners can enjoy a mix of festive dishes and local favourites.

WHERE: Level 3 Grand Mercure Singapore Roxy, 50 East Coast Road, Roxy Square **MRT:** Eunos/Dakota **WHEN/PRICE:** Today - Feb 3, Feb 11 - 19; lunch (noon - 2.30pm): \$58.90++ an adult/\$29.90++ a child/\$41.90 nett a senior/\$37.90 nett a pioneer; dinner (6 - 9.30 pm): \$62.90++ an adult/\$31.90++ a child/\$44.90 nett a senior/\$39.90 nett a pioneer **TEL:** 6340-5665 **INFO:** E-mail H3610-FB3@accor.com

Keyaki Yu Sheng Platters

Keyaki's Wafu Yu Sheng features generous servings of tuna, salmon, yellowtail and tobiko, while the Premium Yu Sheng includes sea urchin and lobster. Both Japanese-inspired yu sheng are topped with ponzu sauce and available only for dine-in.

WHERE: Level 4 Pan Pacific Singapore, 7 Raffles Boulevard **MRT:** Promenade **WHEN:** Jan 22 - Feb 19, 11.30am - 2.30pm & 6.30 - 10.30pm **PRICE:** \$138++ platter **TEL:** 6826-8240 **INFO:** E-mail dining.ppsin@panpacific.com

Goodies From Carlton Hotel

The Alaskan Crab Lo Hei (\$138 - \$238 nett) and Carlton Premium Pineapple Tarts (\$28+, eight pieces) are the signature takeaway goodies from Carlton Hotel, while Deep-Fried Fish Skin with Egg Yolk (\$22.80, 250g) is a new item. The Longevity Pen Cai (\$408 to \$688, for six to 10 people) includes baby abalone, scallops, sea cucumber and dried oysters. Also available are items such as abalone yu sheng (\$128 to \$228), roast duck (\$78) and koi nian gao (\$28).

WHERE: 76 Bras Basah Road **MRT:** City Hall/Bras Basah **WHEN:** Jan 21 - Feb 19 **PRICE:** Various **TEL:** 6349-1292 **INFO:** Email restaurants@carltonhotel.sg or go to www.signatures.carltonhotel.sg

ArtsPicks

Olivia Ho recommends



THE LAMENT: MOUNTAIN GHOST

The Singapore branch of Japanese gallery Ota Fine Arts presents this solo exhibition by Chinese mixed-media artist Cheng Ran.

One of his most notable works is The Lament (above), a ghostly 13-minute video work based on the poem of the same name by Qu Yuan during the Warring States period of ancient China.

In it, a man painted white with tattoo-like marks on his body performs a mysterious ritualistic dance. Gradually,

viewers realise a second video of a guitarist is being projected within the dancer's moving silhouette.

The video's background music is a collaboration among Cheng, Shanghai guitarist Wang Wen Wei and electronic musician Valley.

WHERE: Ota Fine Arts Singapore, 02-13 Gillman Barracks, 7 Lock Road **MRT:** Labrador Park **WHEN:** Jan 12 to Feb 23, 11am to 7pm (Tuesdays to Saturdays), 11am to 6pm (Sundays); closed on Mondays and public holidays **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** www.otafinearts.com

PHOTOS: ARRON TEO, COURTESY OF CHENG RAN, PARKVIEW MUSEUM, PEABODY INSTITUTE



INTRIGUING UNCERTAINTIES

This exhibition at the private Parkview Museum celebrates the art of drawing in charcoal, pencil and ink.

Drawings by 42 contemporary artists from Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas are on display.

Highlights include noted Chinese artist Qiu Zhijie's 7.2m-long Map Of

Art And China After 1989: Theatre Of The World (2017, above), which marks events from the birth of communist China to the landmark Beijing Olympics.

WHERE: Parkview Museum, Level 3, 600 North Bridge Road **MRT:** Bugis **WHEN:** Until Wednesday, noon to 7pm (Mondays to Saturdays) **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** www.parkviewmuseum.com

AN OTHER SPACE

Catch the last weekend of this site-specific exhibition at the Esplanade's visual arts space Jendela by Singaporean artist Tang Ling Nah, which explores transitional spaces in the city.

It consists of four constructed rooms with real and unreal windows and plays with the idea of windows opening into a duality of spaces: inside versus outside, private versus public and reality versus illusion.

Tang demarcates spaces in the rooms using artificial lighting within the gallery and natural light that seeps through Jendela's louvred windows, along with charcoal drawings on the walls (right). After the exhibition ends on Sunday, the drawings on the walls will be erased.

WHERE: Jendela (Visual Arts Space), Level 2 Esplanade Mall, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/City Hall **WHEN:** Today, 11am to 8.30pm; tomorrow and Sunday, 10am to 8.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** www.esplanade.com



PLAY-PLAY: A TOY/PIANO CONCERT

Pianist Huizi Zhang and composer-pianist Gu Wei (above) challenge perceptions of the toy piano as child's play in this concert that premieres new works for the diminutive instrument, including ones written by 20something Singaporean musicians Yuting Tan and Jun An Chew.

The child-sized toy piano looks like a piano, but is closer in sound to a percussion instrument like the German glockenspiel.

A piano has strings, while a toy piano uses metal rods to emit sound and does not have pedals.

WHERE: Esplanade Recital Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/City Hall **WHEN:** Tomorrow, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$25 from play-play.peatix.com

ARTS

AUDITIONS

Vienna Boys Choir Audition

Boys aged nine and 10 who love to sing are invited to audition for the Vienna Boys Choir, which will be performing here on Jan 12. The Austria-based choir has a 500-year musical heritage. **WHERE:** Stage at Buds, Level 1 Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore, Orange Grove Road **MRT:** Orchard/Stevens **WHEN:** Jan 12, 2 - 3pm **ADMISSION:** Free, registration required **INFO:** E-mail ops@chorusart.co

Open Call For Strings For Kindness

Strings for Kindness, an ensemble of young string players, is calling for young violinists – primary school pupils or others – to audition for a chance to join the ensemble and inspire graciousness through kind acts and music playing. **WHERE:** Multi-purpose Room, 8@Mt Sophia **MRT:** Dhoby Ghaut **WHEN:** Jan 19, 5.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** facebook.com/StringsForKindness

BOOKS

Singapore Literature Book Club: The Teenage Textbook By Adrian Tan

The book club discusses Adrian Tan's novels, The Teenage Textbook and its sequel The Teenage Workbook, which follow the life of a student named Mui Ee studying at the fictitious Paya Lebar Junior College. The Teenage Textbook was made into a film in 1998, The Teenage Textbook Movie, which topped the box office in Singapore for four weeks. **WHERE:** Multi-Purpose Room, Central Public Library, Basement 1 National

Library Building, 100 Victoria Street **MRT:** City Hall/Bugis **WHEN:** Jan 16, 7 - 8.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free, register at nlb.gov.sg/golibrary **INFO:** E-mail enquiry@nlb.gov.sg

CONCERTS

Vienna Boys Choir Concert

The illustrious Vienna Boys Choir will perform in a one-night-only concert, which also features two choristers from Singapore. Singapore-born Muqian, 10, and Mateo, 12, whose German and Mexican parents are based here, were picked at an audition in Singapore a year ago. Muqian is the third Singaporean to join the choir. This will also be the only time in their four-year tenure with the choir that the two boys will get to perform on Singapore soil. **WHERE:** Esplanade Concert Hall, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/City Hall **WHEN:** Jan 12, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$35 - \$95, tickets at sistic.com.sg **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** www.svbc.sg

OMM Goes To The Movies

Led by conductor Seow Yibin, the Orchestra of the Music Makers (OMM) performs music from movies such as Star Wars, Harry Potter, The Lord Of The Rings, Star Trek, X-Men, The Avengers, Mulan, How To Train Your Dragon and The Incredibles. **WHERE:** Esplanade Concert Hall, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/City Hall **WHEN:** Jan 11, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$12 - \$37 (\$10 - \$34 for students, full-time national servicemen & seniors) **INFO:** esplanade.com

EXHIBITIONS (GALLERIES)

The Narrator: Ng Wai Choy Solo Exhibition

Singaporean author Ng Wai Choy backpacked around the world in his younger days and has reclaimed his

first love – painting. He recently staged critically acclaimed exhibitions in Taiwan. As he was a writer, his works naturally portray his insights into life in a style where thoughts are dressed in images.

WHERE: Yu Art Studio, 02-01, 164 Race Course Road **MRT:** Farrer Park **WHEN:** Till Sun, 4 - 9pm (today), 11am - 9.30pm (tomorrow & Sun) **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 9691-8481 **INFO:** E-mail onggk51@gmail.com

Disparate Bodies: By Asean Artists

This group exhibition presented by Yavuz Gallery features internationally acclaimed Asean artists Agus Suwage, Mella Jaarsma and J. Ariadhyta Pramuhendra from Indonesia; BenCab and Isabel and Alfredo Aquilizan from the Philippines; and Pinaree Sanpitak from Thailand. The works are in various mediums and revolve around explorations and conceptions of the body. **WHERE:** 02-23 Gillman Barracks, 9 Lock Road **MRT:** Labrador Park **WHEN:** Till Sun, 11am - 7pm (today & tomorrow), 1 - 5pm (Sun) **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** yavuzgallery.com

Fleeting Time – Captured Moment

This exhibition by Ikkan Art Gallery and Miaja Gallery is at the latter's new location at the APS building near Robertson Quay. Featuring three celebrated Japanese artists – TeamLab, Naoya Hatakeyama and Yasumasa Morimura, the works explore themes related to nature, life cycles and time. **WHERE:** Miaja Gallery, Level 2 APS Building, 9 Muthuraman Chetty Road **MRT:** Fort Canning **WHEN:** Till Jan 12, 10am - 7pm (Mon - Fri); by appointment only on Sat & Sun; closed on public holidays **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 6737-8865 **INFO:** E-mail info@miajagallery.com or go to www.miajagallery.com

Passing: A Solo Exhibition By Vincent Leow

The solo exhibition by Singapore artist Vincent Leow showcases his works (2007 to 2018) of paintings, mixed-media and sculptural pieces. In his latest creations, he considers the impermanence of life and explores the sentiment of losing something or someone. **WHERE:** 01-01 HPL House, 50 Cuscaden Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Jan 11 - 26, 10am - 7pm (Mon - Fri); 11am - 6pm (Sat); by appointment only on Sun & public holidays **ADMISSION:** Free **TEL:** 6339-0678 **INFO:** www.ipreciation.com

Boedi Widjaja: Rivers And Lakes Tanah Dan Air

ShanghART Singapore is hosting its first solo exhibition by Boedi Widjaja, featuring new and existing works from his Stone Telling (from 2011) and Imaginary Homeland (from 2015) series. The former looks at geological material transposed as marks, while in the latter, Widjaja employed techniques of tracing, transferring and making negative images to contemplate wuxia films, which he grew up watching in the 1980s.

WHERE: ShanghART Singapore, 02-22 Gillman Barracks, 9 Lock Road **MRT:** Labrador Park **WHEN:** Till Feb 17, 11am - 7pm (Wed - Sun except public holidays) **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** shanghartsingapore.com

THEATRE

A Fortunate Man

This work is a powerful and poignant interrogation about the passions and pressures of being a doctor in the modern world and what that says about the future health of society. **WHERE:** Esplanade Theatre Studio, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/City Hall **WHEN:** Jan 18 & 19, 8pm **ADMISSION:** \$27 (\$19 for students, full-time national servicemen & seniors) **INFO:** esplanade.com

11 – A Performance Piece By Dawn Ng

Telok Ayer Arts Club, in collaboration with Singaporean artist Dawn Ng, presents 11 – an experiential performance piece with four exclusive showings that lead up to a Valentine's Day finale. Taking its cue from the rhythm and pulse of city life, the production brings together 11 pairs of strangers in a bid to find affinity. **WHERE:** Telok Ayer Arts Club, 2 McCallum Street **MRT:** Telok Ayer **WHEN:** Jan 17, 24 & 31 & Feb 14, 8 - 9.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$48, includes cocktail; for tickets & information, e-mail contactus@telokayerartsclub.sg

Kami/Shen By Irfan Kasban

The work delves into how tourism inevitably changes sacred spaces, holy sites and the faces of the otherworldly beings that inhabit them. It gathers inspiration from Conference Of The Birds by Persian poet Farid ud-Din Attar and draws from the themes and narratives explored in the artwork, Pragmatic Prayers For The Kala At The Threshold. Performed in Malay with English and Japanese surtitles. **WHERE:** SAM at 8Q, 8 Queen Street **MRT:** Bras Basah **WHEN:** Jan 25, 7.30 & 8.30pm **ADMISSION:** Free, tickets at apactix.com



ST PHOTO: ERNEST LUIS

A library on fire, haunting by a woman in black

Join Life reporters Toh Wen Li and Olivia Ho (both above) in this new monthly podcast by The Straits Times, in which they talk about books in the headlines and recommend new reads.

In this episode, they chat about The Library Book by Susan Orlean, an investigation into the 1986 Los Angeles Public Library fire and a love letter to libraries everywhere; and Melmoth by Sarah Perry, a neo-Gothic novel in which the guilty are haunted through history by a woman in black.

Produced by: Olivia Ho, Toh Wen Li and Ernest Luis
Feedback to: podcast@sph.com.sg
Download ST & BT podcasts for offline listening: str.sg/sbtpodcasts
On website: str.sg/stpodcasts
On Spotify: str.sg/oeGg
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On Google podcasts: str.sg/oeLG

Eleven pairs of strangers come together in an experiential performance piece in artist Dawn Ng's 11. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN



Film Picks

John Lui Film Correspondent recommends



PHOTOS: ANTICIPATE PICTURES, MIDDLE EAST FILM FESTIVAL, WARNER BROS

MIDDLE EAST FILM FESTIVAL

Presented by the Middle East Institute at the National University of Singapore and supported by the Singapore Film Society (SFS), the festival features seven films from the region.

Highlights include the drama *The Insult* (2017, PG13), Lebanon's nominee for Best Foreign Language Film at the Oscars. In the heat of the moment, harsh words are exchanged between a Lebanese Christian and a Palestinian workman, which sets into motion a series of events that forces

everyone to examine the divisions tearing society apart.

Other films include Turkey's *The Wild Pear Tree* (2018, PG13, above) and Palestine's *Wajib* (2017, NC16).

WHERE: GV VivoCity, 02-30 VivoCity, 1 Harbourfront Walk
MRT: HarbourFront **WHEN:** Jan 10 to 16 **ADMISSION:** \$13 (standard), \$10 (concession for students, national servicemen, seniors aged 55 and above and SFS Film Addicts at the box office) **INFO:** Tickets are available at any GV box office or online at www.gv.com.sg



THEY SHALL NOT GROW OLD (PG13)

99 minutes

Last year marked the 100th anniversary of the end of World War I. Director Peter Jackson and his team took frontline footage of the period and processed it, adding colour and sound and filling in details the film technology of the time could not capture.

The result, given a voiceover by witnesses to the carnage, is the most striking reminder to date of the scale of the conflict, and the lives lost to it.

WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road **MRT:** Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Now showing, various times **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 **INFO:** theprojector.sg



GIRL (R21)

106 minutes/★★★★☆

There has been opposition to this film from the trans community, who say it is a piece of voyeurism that cheapens their experience. That might well be the case, but there is much here that also deepens the understanding of the effort it takes to cross gender boundaries.

Lara (Victor Polster, left) is a 15-year-old Belgian who was born male, but is in the process of transitioning to female. She has begun living as a female in the months before the start of hormone treatments and sex-reassignment surgery. Her family and friends support her choices, but after she transfers to an elite ballet academy, the school's physical and psychological demands begin to take a toll. The film is based on a true story.

WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road **MRT:** Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Now showing, various times **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 **INFO:** theprojector.sg



SUSPIRIA (R21)

152 minutes/Now showing at GV Paya Lebar/★★★★☆

Director Luca Guadagnino uses every trick known to modern film prosthetics to create a work that offers more than atmospheric chills. Bodies are punished in a manner rarely seen outside of the torture porn genre. Under its arthouse skin, this film has a heart of pure grindhouse.

Susie (Dakota Johnson), a naive American from a religious family, has

come to West Berlin in 1977 to train at an elite modern dance academy and becomes a star pupil under the tutelage of Madame Blanc (Tilda Swinton, above). She is a witness to a few strange events, such as the disappearance of another student, Patricia (Chloe Grace Moretz), but her time is spent making new friends, such as with classmate Sara (Mia Goth).

Loosely based on the classic supernatural horror movie of the same name, directed by Dario Argento and released in 1977.

FILMS

Shoplifters (2018, M18)

After one of their shoplifting sessions, Osamu and his son come across a little girl in the freezing cold. At first reluctant to shelter the girl, Osamu's wife agrees to take care of her after learning of her hardships. Although the family is poor, barely making enough money to survive through petty crime, the members seem to live happily together until an unforeseen incident reveals hidden secrets, testing the bonds that unite them.

WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road

MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Tomorrow, 5.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Walk With Me (2017, NC16)

This contemplative journey follows in the steps of Zen master Thich Nhat Hanh and is a rare insight into life within a monastic community. The documentary is narrated by British actor Benedict Cumberbatch.

WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road

MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Tomorrow & Feb 3, 2.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

A Most Violent Year (2014, NC16)

Set during the winter of 1981 – statistically one of the most crime-ridden times in New York City's history – the drama follows the lives of an immigrant and his family as they attempt to capitalise on the American Dream, while the rampant violence,

decay and corruption threaten to destroy all they have built.

WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road

MRT: Nicoll Highway

WHEN: Tomorrow, 7.40pm **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Mirai (2018, PG)

From acclaimed director Mamoru Hosoda (*Summer Wars*, 2009; *Wolf Children*, 2012) and Japan's Studio Chizu comes *Mirai*, a daringly original story of love passed down through generations. When four-year-old Kun meets his new baby sister, his world is turned upside-down. Named *Mirai* (meaning future), the baby quickly wins the hearts of the entire family. As his mother returns to work and his father struggles to run the household, Kun becomes increasingly jealous of baby *Mirai* – until one day he storms off into the garden, where he encounters strange guests from the past and future – including a teenage *Mirai*. Together, Kun and teenage *Mirai* go on a journey through time and space, uncovering their family's incredible story.

WHERE: The Projector, Level 5 Golden Mile Tower, 6001 Beach Road

MRT: Nicoll Highway **WHEN:** Sun, 5.40pm **ADMISSION:** \$13.50 (standard), \$11.50 (concession) **INFO:** theprojector.sg

Capernaum (2018, R)

After fleeing his negligent and abusive parents, a hardened, streetwise 12-year-old boy sues them to protest about the life they have given him. Directed by Nadine Labaki, the film is in Arabic with English subtitles.

WHERE: GV Suntec City, 03-373 Suntec City Mall, 3 Temasek Boulevard **MRT:** Promenade/ Esplanade **WHEN:** Jan 19, 1pm **ADMISSION:** Singapore Film Society membership, from \$18 a month **TEL:** 9017-0160 **INFO:** E-mail info@singaporefilmsociety.com

Yakiniku Dragon (2018, PG)

Yong-Gil Ryukichi runs Yakiniku Dragon, a neighbourhood restaurant in the outskirts of Osaka, with his wife Yong-Sun and his three daughters – Shizuka, Rika, Mika and youngest son Tokio. Follow the story of his family as the girls fall in and out of love, argue, drink, sing and bond with the small Korean community in 1970s Japan. Based on director Wishing Chong's successful theatre production, the film (in Japanese with English subtitles) explores the challenges of being *zainichis* – Koreans trying to integrate into Japanese society.

WHERE: Shaw Theatres Lido, Level 5/6 Shaw House, 350 Orchard Road **MRT:** Orchard **WHEN:** Jan 19, 6.10pm **ADMISSION:** Singapore Film Society membership, from \$18 a month **TEL:** 9017-0160 **INFO:** E-mail info@singaporefilmsociety.com

CONTEST

#OurHawkerCulture Photography Contest

Send in your photographs that represent what makes you proud of Singapore's hawker culture, accompanied by a caption of at least 140 characters via Instagram with the hashtags, #WhatMakesSG and #OurHawkerCulture. Tag and follow @natgeoasia and @gov.sg, and make your account public. Prizes

include a trip for two to National Geographic Odyssey in New York City, a DSLR camera worth \$1,500, a Samsung S9+ 128 GB smartphone worth \$1,398 and Food Panda Vouchers between \$300 and \$1,000.

WHERE: Online **WHEN:** Entries close on Jan 12, 11.59pm

INFO: whatmakesg.com/contest

NTU Singapore Global Digital Art Prize

Entries are open for the inaugural edition of this biennial international competition, which recognises outstanding creativity in art, design and cultural heritage that makes significant use of digital tools in its creation. Top winners will receive cash prizes of up to \$25,000 and the opportunity to premiere their works at a major symposium on the Fourth Industrial Revolution by the NTU Institute of Science and Technology for Humanity in October next year.

WHEN: Closing date: Feb 15 **ADMISSION:** Free **INFO:** NTUdigitalartprize.ntu.edu.sg

National Poetry Competition

Singaporeans and permanent residents can submit unpublished poems based on the theme of metamorphosis, which is about the power of poetry to transform the every day, the forgotten, the forsaken, the little and the common into something beautiful. Individual winners can get up to \$500 cash. The two main categories are Juniors (under age 18) and Seniors (age 18 and above). Under a new Super Junior category (10 to 14 years old), winners will receive up to \$200 plus books and other prizes in kind.

WHERE: Submit entries via bit.ly/poetry2019submit

WHEN: Closing date: Feb 28 **INFO:** poetryfestival.sg/ national-poetry-competition

KIDS

An Afternoon With The Great Singapore Poo Sale

Find out about the new children's book, *The Great Singapore Poo Sale And Other Beastly Business*, with an exciting line-up of activities, including storytelling by author Maureen Yeo, a drawing session, a talk on Singapore's wildlife, an animal-themed sing-along and a quiz with prizes to be won.

WHERE: Cannonball Room, Supertree Grove, Gardens by the Bay, 18 Marina Gardens Drive **MRT:** Bayfront **WHEN:** Tomorrow, 4 - 5pm **ADMISSION:** Free, registration on first-come, first-served basis **INFO:** gardensbythebay.com.sg

OTHERS

Dahlia Dreams At Gardens By The Bay

The popular Dahlia Dreams floral display at Gardens by the Bay is returning. Amid a scenic landscape dotted with elegant pavilions, rotating water wheels, and a majestic 40m-long archway of red lanterns, there will be spectacular dahlias – some with blooms as large as one's face – along with other festive and auspicious plants like narcissus, cymbidium and chrysanthemum. Keep your eyes peeled for the exquisite *Senrinzaki* or Thousand Blooms chrysanthemum arrangements, which have been painstakingly cultivated over at least

one year to result in the magnificent display of 500 to 1,500 flowers blooming from a single plant. **WHERE:** Flower Dome, Gardens by the Bay, 18 Marina Gardens Drive **MRT:** Bayfront **WHEN:** Jan 18 - Feb 24, 9am - 9pm **ADMISSION:** Charges to the conservatories apply **INFO:** gardensbythebay.com.sg

LAST CALL

Time Thing Helseth – Arutiunian Trumpet Concerto

Acclaimed Norwegian trumpeter Time Thing Helseth makes her Singapore debut with one of the best-loved 20th-century trumpet showpieces, Arutiunian's Trumpet Concerto. Performing with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra, the concert, conducted by Jun Markl, will also feature Saint-Saens' impressions of Algeria, De Falla's Three-Cornered Hat and Ravel's Alborada and Bolero. **WHERE:** Esplanade Concert Hall, 1 Esplanade Drive **MRT:** Esplanade/City Hall **WHEN:** Tomorrow, 7.30pm **ADMISSION:** \$15 - \$88, tickets at sistic.com.sg **TEL:** 6348-5555 **INFO:** sso.org.sg/whats-on

• The listings on these Happenings pages are free. Write to Life Happenings, Life, The Straits Times, 1000 Toa Payoh North, Singapore 318994 or e-mail stlife@sph.com.sg at least two weeks ahead. Include the name of the event, organiser, venue, date and time, ticket prices and nearest MRT station, as well as your name, address and contact number. We reserve the right to edit or reject items. Go to www.straitstimes.com (click on Lifestyle) for more listings.

GoAheadQuoteMe



It has come to my attention that some folks are getting harassed by some fans for not liking Aquaman. Please don't do that. Not the kind of support I want... Vice versa, it's okay to not like my film, but there's no need to attack me personally or tag me on hates.



AQUAMAN DIRECTOR JAMES WAN on reactions to his hit movie



If he really needed a home, then he has one with us. But I don't think there is going to be any shortage of loving homes after all the exposure he has got.



RAPPER SNOOP DOGG, on a pup called Snoop which was abandoned by its owner



My mum had breast cancer when I was 19 and I was listening to a lot of Cat Stevens at that time and this song for some reason was very helpful and soothing.



EMMA STONE on seeking refuge in Where Do The Children Play (1970)



A Star Is Born's Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper (both left) are up for Best Actress and Actor in a Movie – Drama while Olivia Colman in The Favourite (above) is contending for Best Actress in a Movie – Musical or Comedy. PHOTOS: FOX SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES, WARNER BROS

Who will win at the Globes?

Front-runners include Lady Gaga and Bradley Cooper for A Star Is Born as well as Olivia Colman for The Favourite

NEW YORK • Timing is everything in show business.

The Golden Globes offers the highest-profile pit stop on the way to the Oscars and the ceremony on Sunday (Monday morning, Singapore) provides perhaps the most advantageously timed edition yet.

The day after NBC shows the Globes, voting begins for the Oscar nominations. A win on Sunday will help contenders remain front of mind for academy members filling out their ballots.

The Globes are voted by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association, a group of around 90 journalists.

Here are the predictions on who will end up with a perfect Sunday.

Best Actress in a Movie – Drama
Glenn Close (The Wife)
Lady Gaga (A Star Is Born)
Nicole Kidman (Destroyer)
Melissa McCarthy (Can You Ever Forgive Me?)
Rosamund Pike (A Private War)

Though the eventual Oscar race for best actress will probably include Olivia Colman for The Favourite, the Globes have her competing in the comedy category, so this particular contest will come down to veteran Close and pop star Lady Gaga.

Close is a 15-time Globe nominee who has won twice. Lady Gaga won the only Globe she was nominated for before, thanks to her performance in 2015 TV show American Horror Story: Hotel.

Globes voters know that Lady

Gaga would deliver a capital-M moment if she wins and that will probably tip the scales in her favour.

Best Actor in a Movie – Drama
Bradley Cooper (A Star Is Born)
Willem Dafoe (At Eternity's Gate)
Lucas Hedges (Boy Erased)
Rami Malek (Bohemian Rhapsody)
John David Washington (BlackKkKlansman)

Will A Star Is Born take home his-and-hers Globes? Punters would put their chips on Cooper to prevail, with one caveat: Voters adored Bohemian Rhapsody and could push Malek to a surprise win.

Best Movie – Drama
Black Panther
BlackKkKlansman
Bohemian Rhapsody
If Beale Street Could Talk
A Star Is Born

Though Globes voters have made their fair share of wacky choices in the past, the group knows that recognising Bohemian Rhapsody in this category would draw derision, especially since Bryan Singer, a magnet for controversy, was fired as director during production.

A Star Is Born, then, should easily coast to victory.

Best Actress in a Movie – Musical or Comedy
Emily Blunt (Mary Poppins Returns)
Olivia Colman (The Favourite)
Elsie Fisher (Eighth Grade)
Charlize Theron (Tully)
Constance Wu (Crazy Rich Asians)

This race is between two Brits. Blunt is coming off a banner year that includes starring in A Quiet Place. Though Globes voters virtu-

ally shut out that horror film, its sum-

perhit status only adds strength to her bid for Mary Poppins Returns. Colman's turn as the addled queen in The Favourite has the most Oscar heat. While Blunt would be a practically perfect Globe winner, the voters will probably go for Colman, so as to seem more prescient.

Best Actor in a Movie – Musical or Comedy
Christian Bale (Vice)
Lin-Manuel Miranda (Mary Poppins Returns)
Viggo Mortensen (Green Book)
Robert Redford (The Old Man & The Gun)
John C. Reilly (Stan & Ollie)

Adam McKay's Vice picked up the most Globes nods of any movie, so there is no reason to bet against Bale's performance as Dick Cheney.

Only Mortensen could put up a fight, but there is an easier category to come for voters who want to recognise Green Book.

Best Movie – Musical or Comedy
Crazy Rich Asians
The Favourite
Green Book
Mary Poppins Returns
Vice

Globes voters were clearly partial to Vice, but not long after the nominations were announced, the film's review embargo broke and Vice got wildly mixed notices.

Will that cool voters' ardour? If so, the better-reviewed The Favourite is an easy pick.

Best Supporting Actress in a Movie
Amy Adams (Vice)
Claire Foy (First Man)

Regina King (If Beale Street Could Talk)
Emma Stone (The Favourite)
Rachel Weisz (The Favourite)

Though Adams has never won an Oscar, she has taken home two Golden Globes. In a year when she may have her strongest shot at the Academy Award, one suspects Globe voters will be inclined to throw their weight behind her.

Best Supporting Actor in a Movie
Mahershala Ali (Green Book)
Timothee Chalamet (Beautiful Boy)
Adam Driver (BlackKkKlansman)
Richard E. Grant (Can You Ever Forgive Me?)
Sam Rockwell (Vice)

Two years ago, when Ali picked up nearly every trophy under the sun for Moonlight, the Globes were an outlier.

This year should prove to be a make-good for Ali, considered the Oscar front-runner for what is practically a co-lead in Green Book.

Best Director – Movie
Bradley Cooper (A Star Is Born)
Alfonso Cuarón (Roma)
Peter Farrelly (Green Book)
Spike Lee (BlackKkKlansman)
Adam McKay (Vice)

Netflix hopes that Roma will be the streamer's first nominee for best picture at the Oscars, but since it is a foreign-language film, it is not eligible for best drama at the Globes.

Still, the film was allowed to compete in most other categories and while its lead Yalitza Aparicio did not make it into the best-actress race, Cuarón still has so much industry heat that he could trump first-time film-maker Cooper.

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The Fullerton Hotel Singapore
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GARFIELD



Free to air

CHANNEL 5

AM
6.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 15 (HD) (PG) (V)
7.00 First Look Asia (Simulcast From CNA) (CA)
9.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (IE)
9.40 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)
10.00 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (V)
10.30 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
11.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (HD) (PG) (V)
PM
12.00 Worst Cooks In America 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
1.00 Wheel Of Fortune 36 (HD) (CC) (V)
1.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
2.00 Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd 3 (SC)
2.30 Don't Make Us Invisible (HD) (IE)
3.00 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
3.40 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)
4.00 Meet The MP (HD) (PG) (SC)
4.30 America's Got Talent 12 (HD) (PG) (V)
5.30 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (HD) (PG) (V)
6.30 Journey To The Center Of The Earth (PG) (M)
8.30 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 News 5 (HD)
9.30 On The Red Dot – Old Enough! (CA)
10.00 Pitch Black (PG) (M)
AM
12.00 Kin (PG) (CC) (D)
12.30 Whacked Out Sports (PG) (V)
12.50 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16 (PG) (V)
1.40 This Is Us (HD) (PG) (D)
2.30 The Dr Oz Show 9 (HD) (PG13) (IE)
3.20 Everyday Gourmet 3 (HD) (IE)
3.50 Worst Cooks In America 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
4.40 The \$100,000 Pyramid (HD) (V)
5.10 The Dr Oz Show 10 (HD) (PG) (IE)
5.50 Just For Laughs Gags 17 (HD) (V)

CHANNEL 8

AM
6.00 Knock! Knock! Who's There? (V)
7.00 Love? (PG) (D)
7.30 Hello Singapore Highlights (HD) (CA)
8.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Morning Express (HD) (News)
9.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 Focus (CC) (CA)

10.30 The Peach Blossom Village (Chinese Opera)
11.30 How Are You? (PG) (CC) (D) (Debut)
PM
12.30 JML Home Shopping (Infomercial)
1.00 News 8 At One (HD)
1.30 Crimewatch 2018 (HD) (PG) (CC) (IE) (Finale)
2.00 Cookie Master (SC)
2.30 Your Hand In Mine (HD) (CC) (D)
3.30 Golden Age Talentime (HD) (CC) (V)
4.30 Taste of Life (PG) (D)
5.30 118 Reunion (PG) (CC) (D)
6.30 Hello Singapore (HD) (News)
7.30 Jalan Jalan (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Body SOS 7 (CC) (V)
8.30 Frontline (CA)
9.00 Heart To Heart (PG) (CC) (D)
10.00 News Tonight (HD)
10.30 Food And Beverage Investigators 8 (IE)
11.00 Princess Agents (PG) (D)
AM
12.00 The Princess Weiyung (PG) (D)
1.00 From The Medical Files 2 (D) (Finale)
2.00 Changing Fortunes (D)
4.00 A Place Called Home (PG) (D)

CHANNEL U

PM
3.00 Heroes Of Remix (V)
4.30 Holiday Gone Wrong (PG) (CC) (IE)
5.00 Cheongdamdong Scandal (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 The Menu (PG) (CC) (D)
7.00 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)
9.00 Hello Taiwan (IE)
10.00 Black Knight (PG) (CC) (D)
11.00 News Tonight
11.30 Hello Taiwan (IE)
AM
12.30 You Are The Only One (PG) (CC) (D)
2.30 Close

CNA

AM
6.00 Singapore Tonight
7.00 First Look Asia
9.00 Asia Business First
10.02 Champions For Change
11.00 News Now
PM
1.02 Deciphering Indonesia With Cheryl Marella
2.00 News Now
4.02 Champions For Change

5.00 News Now
7.02 Edible Wild (CC)
7.30 Made In Singapore (CC)
8.00 Primetime Asia
9.02 Conversation With (CC)
9.30 Super Octogenarians (CC)
10.00 Singapore Tonight
11.02 Deciphering Indonesia With Cheryl Marella
AM
12.00 News Now
12.30 Asia Business First Weekend
1.02 Conversation With
1.30 Super Octogenarians
2.00 News Now
2.30 Correspondents' Diary
3.02 Champions For Change
4.00 News Now
4.30 Correspondents' Diary
5.02 Conversation With
5.30 Super Octogenarians
Programmes may be pre-empted by breaking news

VASANTHAM

PM
3.00 Super Samayal 4 (IE)
3.30 Azhagiya Snehithi 2 (IE)
4.00 Sundaram Kudumbathinar (HD) (D)
4.30 Vivegam (IE)
5.30 Mighty Raju (S)
6.00 Suryaputhri 2 (D)
7.00 Oru Oorilae (CC) (S)
7.30 Janani D/O Madhavan (CC) (S)
8.00 A For Anbu (CC) (S)
8.30 Tamil Seithi (News)
9.00 Indian Beat 9 (HD) (CC) (IE)
9.30 Tamil Talkies: Lucky Man (CC) (M)
AM
12.30 Tamil Seithi (News) (R)
1.00 Close

OKTO

AM
9.00 Messy Goes To Okido (HD) (P)
9.30 Teddies (P)
10.00 Floglogs (HD) (P)
10.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
11.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)
11.30 Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood (HD) (P)
PM
12.00 Bugsville (P)
12.30 Teddies (HD) (IE)
1.00 Little Charmers (HD) (P)
1.30 Messy Goes To Okido (HD) (P)
2.00 Floglogs (HD) (P)

2.30 Sesame Street (HD) (P)
3.00 Dora The Explorer (HD) (P)
3.30 Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood (HD) (P)
4.00 All Over The Workplace (S)
4.30 Sherazade: The Untold Stories (S)
5.00 Littlest Pet Shop (S)
5.30 Grizzly & The Lemmings (S)
6.00 The Lion Guard (S)
6.30 The Diary Of Amos Lee (S)
7.00 My Little Pony: Friendship Is Magic (HD) (CC) (S)
7.30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles (HD) (CC) (S)
8.00 Star Wars Rebels (HD) (CC) (S)
8.30 Inazuma Eleven (HD) (CC) (S)
9.00 Tryfactor (CC) (Sports)
9.30 ONE Championship 2018/19 – ONE Warrior Series 2 (HD) (Sports)
10.00 ONE Championship 2018/19 – Best Of 2018 (HD) (Variety)
11.00 ONE Championship Weekly (HD) (PG13) (Sports)
11.30 ONE Championship 2018/19: Warrior's Dream (Jakarta) (HD) (PG13) (Sports)
AM
12.00 Close

SURIA

PM
4.00 Seindah Takdir Cinta (PG) (D)
5.00 Ti Amo, Sweetheart 100 Han! (PG) (CC) (D)
6.00 Kem Tahan (IE)
6.30 Makan Xtrim (HD) (PG) (IE)
7.00 Teratai Kemboja (HD) (PG) (CC) (D)
8.00 Berita (HD) (News)
8.30 Mamaku Sayang (CC) (S) (Debut)
9.00 Tombiruo: Penunggu Rimba (PG) (CC) (M)
11.30 Berita (HD) (News)
AM
12.00 Close

C: Children; CA: Current Affairs;
CC: Closed Captions; Cul: Culture;
D: Drama; IE: Info-Ed; M: Movies;
P: Preschool; PG: Parental Guidance;
R: Repeat; S: Schoolkids; SC: Sitcom;
V: Variety

Programme schedules correct at time of printing. Telecast details from Mediacorp, StarHub and Singtel TV. For pay TV updates, go to www.starhub.com/tv or www.singtelv.com.sg

StarHub TV

HISTORY (CHANNEL 401)

AM
7.05 Storage Wars 11
7.35 Storage Wars: Texas 6
8.00 Storage Wars 10
8.30 Pawn Stars 19
9.30 Forged In Fire 5
10.25 Alone 3
11.20 Navy Seals – Kill Or Capture
PM
12.15 Swamp People 9
1.10 History Drama: Vikings 5
2.05 Alone 3
3.00 Storage Wars: Texas 6
3.30 The Pickers 10
4.25 History Drama: Vikings 5
5.20 Forged In Fire 5
6.15 The Pickers 10
7.10 Pawn Stars 19
8.05 Storage Wars: Texas 6
8.30 Storage Wars 10
9.00 President Obama: In His Own Words
10.50 Genius
11.45 Swamp People 9

LIFETIME (CHANNEL 514)

AM
7.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown
8.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
9.00 Flipping Vegas 3
10.00 Frontline Fashion
11.00 The Best Moment To Quit Your Job
PM
12.00 Dance Moms 6
1.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
2.00 Who Killed JonBenet?
3.35 Born This Way 2
4.30 Little Women LA: Terra's Little Family
5.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
6.00 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown
7.00 Making A Model With Yolanda Hadid
8.00 The Rap Game 3
9.00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show 16
10.00 Bad Sister
11.35 Man Vs Child: Chef Showdown

HBO (CHANNEL 601)

AM
7.50 Martian Child
9.35 Tears Of The Sun
11.35 Loving (NC16)
PM
1.40 Blood Diamond (NC16)
4.00 Paddington 2
5.40 Cars 2
7.30 Pitch Perfect 3 (NC16)
9.00 Transformers: The Last Knight (NC16)
11.30 The Great Wall (NC16)

CINEMAX (CHANNEL 611)

AM
8.45 Stop! Or My Mom Will Shoot
10.10 Switchback
PM
12.05 Another 48 Hrs (NC16)
1.40 Superstar
3.00 Pootie Tang
4.20 Star Wars: Episode V – The Empire Strikes Back
6.25 The Skulls II

8.05 Mission To Mars
10.00 Driven
11.55 Strike Back (M18)

HUB E CITY (CHANNEL 825)

AM
7.00 Maids (HD)
8.15 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
9.15 Dowry (HD)
10.15 The Amazing Race China 4 (HD)
11.45 Fun Abroad (HD)
PM
12.15 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)
1.30 Maids (HD)
2.45 Sound Of My Dream 2 (HD)
4.45 The Gentlemen Of Wolgyesu Tailor Shop (HD)
6.00 Dowry (HD)
7.00 Hot Door Night 15 (HD)
8.00 Mr Player 7 (HD)
10.00 Sound Of My Dream 3 (Live)(HD)

HUB SPORTS 1 (CHANNEL 201)

AM
7.00 Cycling: 2018 Shanghai Criterium By Le Tour De France Highlights
8.00 Mubadala World Tennis Championship 2018 Day 2 5th Place Match
10.00 Mubadala World Tennis Championship 2018 Day 2 Semi-finals 1
PM
12.00 Mubadala World Tennis Championship 2018 Day 2 Semi-finals 2
2.00 FEI Equestrian World 2018
2.30 Tennis: 2018 Davis Cup By BNP Paribas Finals: France Vs Croatia Day 1 (Rubber 1 & 2)
8.00 Extreme Sports: World Surf League 2018: Women's Hawaiian Pro Highlights
9.00 Motorsports: Mitsubishi Motors Desafio Inca Peru
9.30 Tennis: ATP 250 Tata Open Maharashtra 2019 Semi-finals

HUB SPORTS 2 (CHANNEL 202)

AM
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport: TV
8.00 National Basketball League Round 11 Cairns Taipans Vs Perth Wildcats
10.00 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 15 Middlesbrough Vs Derby County
PM
12.00 Magazine: Omnisport: TV
12.30 Asean Basketball League 2018/19 Hong Kong Eastern Vs Mono Vampire
2.30 The Football Review
3.00 Wrestling: WWE Smackdown (PG)
4.30 National Basketball League Round 12 Adelaide 36ers Vs New Zealand Breakers (Live)
6.30 Magazine: Fight Stars
7.00 National Basketball League 2018/19 – NBL Slam
7.30 Magazine: Omnisport: TV
8.00 Wrestling: WWE Bottomline (PG)
9.00 Football: EFL Championship 2018 Matchday 26 Nottingham Forest Vs Leeds United
11.00 National Basketball League 2018/19 – NBL Slam
11.30 Magazine: Omnisport: TV

Singtel TV

CARTOON NETWORK (CHANNEL 226)

AM
6.00 Oggy & The Cockroaches
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
8.00 Teen Titans Go!
9.00 Grizzly And The Lemmings
9.30 The Tom And Jerry Show
10.00 We Bare Bears
10.30 Supernooobs
11.00 The Powerpuff Girls
PM
12.00 Teen Titans Go!
1.00 We Bare Bears
2.00 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
2.30 The Powerpuff Girls
3.00 Running Man Animation
3.30 Craig Of The Creek
4.00 We Bare Bears
4.30 The Powerpuff Girls
5.00 Teen Titans Go!
5.30 OK K.O.! Let's Be Heroes
6.30 Running Man Animation
7.00 The Tom And Jerry Show
7.30 Grizzly And The Lemmings
8.00 We Bare Bears
9.00 The Powerpuff Girls
10.00 Regular Show
10.30 Steven Universe
11.00 Clarence
11.30 Adventure Time

AXN (HD) (CHANNEL 304)

AM
6.00 Valor
6.45 The Amazing Race 30
7.35 The Blacklist 5
8.25 The Elements: Cosentino
9.15 American Ninja Warrior 7
10.05 Valor
10.55 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
11.45 The Amazing Race 30
PM
12.40 The Elements: Cosentino
1.25 Quantico 2
2.15 American Ninja Warrior 7
3.05 Valor
3.55 The Blacklist 5
4.45 Alias 3
5.35 American Ninja Warrior 7
6.30 The Elements: Cosentino
7.20 The Amazing Race 30
8.15 Instinct
9.10 Caught On Camera With Nick Cannon 2
10.05 Behind The Blacklist 2018 Special
10.35 The Blacklist 6
11.30 The Elements: Cosentino

WARNER TV (HD) (CHANNEL 306)

AM
6.00 iZombie 4
6.50 Person Of Interest 4
7.40 Lethal Weapon 2
8.30 Supergirl 2
9.20 The Mentalist 5
10.10 iZombie 4
10.55 Top 20 Funniest 2

11.40 Pacific Rim
PM
2.05 Friends 7
2.30 iZombie 4
3.15 Top 20 Funniest 2
4.00 The Mentalist 5
4.50 Supergirl 2
5.40 Person Of Interest 4
6.30 The Mentalist 5
7.20 Friends 7
8.10 The Big Bang Theory 12
8.35 Young Sheldon 2
9.00 Goth 5
9.50 Batman

COMEDY CENTRAL ASIA (HD) (CHANNEL 324)

AM
6.00 At Midnight With Chris Hardwick 2
6.25 The Daily Show 24
6.50 Just For Laughs Gags 10
7.15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
7.40 Mr Bean
8.10 Your Face Or Mine 4
8.35 Most Ridiculous
9.05 Billy On The Street 5
9.25 Takeshi's Castle 4
9.50 Mr Bean
10.20 Most Ridiculous Asia With Wah!Banana
10.45 Almost Royals
11.15 Saturday Night Live 43
PM
12.00 The Daily Show 24
12.25 The Goldbergs 5
1.15 Hot In Cleveland 5
2.05 The Comedy Jam
2.55 Takeshi's Castle 4
3.20 Most Ridiculous Asia With Wah!Banana
3.45 Almost Royals
4.15 The Goldbergs 5
5.05 Hot In Cleveland 5
5.55 Jane Lynch – Tall Blonde And Handsome
6.40 The Daily Show 24
7.05 Your Face Or Mine 4
7.30 Most Ridiculous
7.55 Billy On The Street 5
8.20 Takeshi's Castle 4
8.45 The Goldbergs 5
9.35 Hot In Cleveland 5
10.00 Funny As Hell 3
11.25 Above Average Presents
11.30 The Daily Show 24

JIA LE (HD) (CHANNEL 502)

AM
6.00 Chronicle Of Love
7.00 First Love
8.00 Entrepreneurial Age
9.00 Speed
10.00 100% Wife
PM
12.10 First Love
1.00 In The Name Of Love
2.00 100% Wife
4.10 Entrepreneurial Age
5.00 First Love
6.00 In The Name Of Love
7.00 100% Wife
9.10 First Love
10.00 Entrepreneurial Age
11.00 Eagle And Youngster

TheStarsSay

Aries (March 21 – April 19)
You are concerned how others are seeing you and today may bring some new information to light.

Taurus (April 20 – May 20)
Someone new has a great idea. His understanding runs deeper than what you see or expect.

Gemini (May 21 – June 20)
Deal with someone who is not being upfront with you, but you have to be clear with the right people too.

Cancer (June 21 – July 22)
You are more cognisant of what is going on around you and can more easily see through lies.

Leo (July 23 – Aug 22)
Try to help a friend in need – his appreciation could make your whole week feel like a big win.

Virgo (Aug 23 – Sept 22)
Romance may be in store for you in the least likely places, like work or school.

Libra (Sept 23 – Oct 22)
You are nostalgic for old times. Nonetheless, try to appreciate the little things real life has to offer.

Scorpio (Oct 23 – Nov 21)
You are better off as part of a team, so make sure you can pair up or find a group to work with.

Sagittarius (Nov 22 – Dec 21)
Deal with any financial problem honestly and directly – you have the right kind of energy to put it to rest.

Capricorn (Dec 22 – Jan 19)
Your energy keeps you pushing forward without missing a beat and you might impress more people.

Aquarius (Jan 20 – Feb 18)
You do not have any idea why things are happening the way they are, so try to relax.

Pisces (Feb 19 – March 20)
Your family or colleagues need a change. Now is a good time to start pushing for something new.

• Provided by Astrology.com (www.astrology.com)

Radio

KISS92

AM
6.00 Maddy, Jason & Arnold In The Morning
10.00 Carol Smith
PM
1.00 Charmaine Yee
4.00 Shan Wee
8.00 Josh's Goodnight Kiss

ONE FM 91.3

AM
6.00 ONE FM's #1 Breakfast Show With Glenn And The Flying Dutchman
10.00 Cheryl Miles
PM
4.00 Weekdays With ONE FM
MONEY FM 89.3
AM
6.00 The Breakfast Huddle With Elliott Danker, Yasmin Jonkers & Ryan Huang
10.00 Midday With Howie Lim
PM
2.00 Prime Time With Claressa Monteiro
4.00 The Curve With Michelle Martin & Bernard Lim

UFM100.3

AM
6.00 UFM100.3 Mornings With Wenhong, Limei & Xiaozhu
10.00 Lively Life With Kevin
PM
1.00 Tea With Yuling
4.00 Sing-a-long With Xinying & Weilong
8.00 Feel The Night With Chengyao

96.3 HAO FM

AM
6.00 Morning Drive Time With Jing Yun, De Ming And Jie Qi
10.00 Lunch Break With Anna
PM
1.00 Automation
4.00 Evening Drive Time With Li Yi And Guo Xian
8.00 Night Time With Wei Wen

Tides

SUN RISE/SET TIME: 7.08am/7.11pm
MOON RISE/SET TIME: 5.28am/4.48pm

TIDES TODAY: Singapore: 4.03am (1.6m), 9.41am (2.9m), 4.33pm (0.6m), 11.37pm (2.7m). Desaru: 3.56am (1.9m), 8.50am (2.5m), 3.46pm (0.9m), 11.18pm (2.8m). Port Dickson: 5.42am (2.6m), 12.44pm (0.7m), 6.16pm (2.2m). Mersing: 4.08am (2.1m), 7.49am (2.4m), 2.58pm (1m), 10.31pm (3.2m).

TIDES TOMORROW: Singapore: 4.41am (1.7m), 10.18am (3m), 5.05pm (0.5m). Desaru: 4.39am (1.9m), 9.26am (2.5m), 4.24pm (0.8m), 11.54pm (2.8m). Port Dickson: 12.25am (0.4m), 6.18am (2.6m), 1.21pm (0.7m), 6.53pm (2.3m). Mersing: 4.55am (2.1m), 8.35am (2.4m), 3.38pm (1m), 11.09pm (3.2m).

For updates and more details, call Meteorological Service Singapore, NEA, on 6542-7788 or go to www.nea.gov.sg

Susan Boyle ready for comeback

LONDON • Susan Boyle “woke up” even hard-to-please entertainment mogul Simon Cowell when she sang I Dreamed A Dream at an audition of Britain’s Got Talent in 2009. Though that show – in which he was a judge and she finished second eventually – catapulted her to fame, she also had to endure some nightmares, from the pressure of being under the spotlight to abuse from taunting teens. Now, Boyle, 57, who has been out of the limelight in the last few years, is ready to make a comeback. According to The Mirror, she will star in America’s Got Talent (AGT): The Champions, which starts on Monday and sees other winners of past editions vying for the title of top dog. AGT judge Mel B has inadvertently revealed in a podcast that Boyle is already through to the semi-finals of the programme which recorded Boyle’s segment in October. Boyle, who is signed to the Syco record label founded by AGT judge Cowell, said last week: “I couldn’t walk away from a second chance to prove myself. I’m really looking forward to singing – this time, with something to prove.” In a promotional clip for AGT, she also said: “(I’m) a champion for those who don’t have the confidence to do things and don’t have a voice; the ones people tend to ignore.” In another indication of her walking her talk, she is also set to release a new album. She last rolled out an album, A Wonderful World, in 2016 but has largely stayed out of the limelight since, as she grappled with personal issues, such as tiffs with family members, reportedly over money, and run-ins with hooligans. But she has stood her ground, staying put in a council house she grew up in, and which she now owns. “I won’t be driven out of my home – why would I let the bullies win?” she said defiantly.



PHOTO: REUTERS

Kim and Kanye expecting fourth child

LOS ANGELES • Kim Kardashian and Kanye West (both above) are expecting a fourth child – again using a surrogate. Celebrity magazines Us Weekly and People quoted sources close to the couple as saying the surrogate was pregnant and expected to give birth in May. Reality TV star Kardashian and rapper West’s third child, Chicago, was born via a surrogate in January last year. The couple have two other children – North, five, and Saint, three. They turned to surrogacy after doctors warned Kardashian of serious health risks if she became pregnant again after her first two children. Us Weekly reported that the couple put their plans for a fourth child on hold about six months ago as West was struggling with mental health issues. He said last year he suffers from bipolar disorder and embarked on a bizarre Twitter spree that culminated in a rambling October meeting at the White House with United States President Donald Trump, whom West supports. “Kim wanted their carrier to be pregnant shortly after Chicago’s birth, but they put those plans on hold when Kanye was having his issues,” a source told Us Weekly. “Kanye has been great. He’s been healthy, happy and his head is clear. They are both very excited for this new baby.”

REUTERS

Aquaman makes a splash



Jason Momoa (above, with Nicole Kidman, left, and Amber Heard) continues to make waves. Even as his movie Aquaman generates a big box-office splash, the 39-year-old actor has netted the accolade of the world’s most handsome man from a group led by TC Candler, creator of the Annual Independent Critics List. South Korean boyband member Jungkook came in second while actor Idris Elba came in third. PHOTO: REUTERS

Hotpot comment gets Chua Lam in hot water

HONG KONG • The countdown has begun for a favourite reunion meal – hotpot – for many Chinese families on the eve of Chinese New Year next month. The method of cooking raw food in boiling hot soup has also spawned successful chains including Coca and Haidilao in Singapore. But Chua Lam, a famous Hong Kong restaurant critic and television personality, has poured cold water over this treat, describing it as a cooking method “totally lacking in cultural significance”. “You just throw some ingredients into a pot. I don’t get what’s delicious about it. If hotpot fandom continues to grow, you’ll see fewer and fewer chefs in the years to come,” he said on Chinese talk show Day Day Up. According to The Guardian, one of the hosts had asked him what dish he would like to see go extinct, and he had mentioned “hotpot”. His comments got many viewers hot under the collar. One person posted online: “Chinese hotpot has an abundance of cultural significance, from its broth to the order that you put ingredients into various sauces. “Trashing hotpot exposed your ignorance and your inability to discover cultural details in things.”

Olivia Newton-John not weeks from death, says niece

NEW YORK • It is such a sick rumour, fumed the niece of Olivia Newton-John after online talk had it that the singer has only weeks to live. On Wednesday, Ms Tottie Goldsmith, a singer-actor, clarified the situation and posted on Instagram: “Just giving you the heads up that Livvy is in good health, so let’s leave that distressing rumour where it belongs.” She also shared a photo of her with Newton-John who was first diagnosed with cancer in 1992. In 2017, the singer revealed she had been diagnosed with cancer for a second time. The 70-year-old herself also took to social media to quell the latest speculation: “I just want to say the rumours of my death have been greatly exaggerated.” “I’m doing great and I want to wish all of you the happiest, healthiest 2019 that’s possible. Thank you all for the wonderful love and support for me and for my Olivia Newton-John Cancer Wellness Centre in Melbourne, Australia,” she added. Recently, RadarOnline reported that her body appeared to be “shutting down” and that she was “clinging to life” so that she could see her daughter Chloe Lattanzi marry her longtime fiancé James Driskill this year.

Eric Tsang shows footage of crash to prove his innocence

HONG KONG • Actor Eric Tsang had denied that he was drink-driving when he was involved in an accident in Japan on Christmas Day. Now, he has provided proof that the other vehicle involved in the crash had gone out of control and slammed into his car. Tsang, 65, said the company, which he had rented the car from, had provided him with dashcam footage of the incident. “They totally lost control of the van and slid towards us,” he said in the South China Morning Post report. The occupants in the van included Mr Li Chi-hang, the Hong Kong police force’s director of crime and security, and his family. “The Japanese police asked if I wanted to prosecute. I said we were both Hong Kongers and they were seriously injured so I’ll just leave (matters as they are).” Tsang, who was travelling with a make-up artist, revealed that his ribs were slightly fractured in the crash. Both Mr Li and his wife had to undergo surgery and their condition has since reportedly improved.

Buzzing

Daryl Dragon has died

Daryl Dragon, one half of The Captain & Tennille, died from renal failure on Wednesday at age 76, in Prescott, Arizona. The pop duo’s hits included Do That To Me One More Time (1979) and Love Will Keep Us Together (1975).

Record earnings for Hamilton musical

The Hamilton musical last week grossed more than US\$4 million (\$\$5.5 million), the first Broadway show to make that much money in a single week. The feat came from high ticket prices over just eight performances.

LEADERSHIP INSPIRE

THE STRAITS TIMES SINGAPOREAN OF THE YEAR 2018

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B| HOME

12

LENGTH OF TIME IN MINUTES OF EACH OF FOUR FIREWORKS DISPLAYS AT RIVER HONGBAO THIS YEAR **B3**

Some experts reckon founder Irvin Gunawan's apology – in the form of a statement posted on Irvins' Facebook and Instagram accounts on Wednesday – would help repair the damage done to the brand's reputation. PHOTO: IRVINS SALTED EGG/FACEBOOK



Irvins' prompt apology may help brand, say experts

Impact likely short term, snack maker must explain lizard fiasco to regain trust, they say



The Irvins Salted Egg stall in VivoCity yesterday. Thai tourist and engineer Maneerat Thimasarn was not deterred by news that a customer in Bangkok had found a dead lizard in a packet of salted egg fish skin. He bought six packets of the snack from the VivoCity outlet. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Ng Huiwen and Hariz Baharudin

While home-grown company Irvins Salted Egg's reputation has taken a hit following the incident in which a lizard was found in one of its snacks, the brand's popularity is unlikely to crumble, said branding and marketing experts.

Ms Jane Holloway, 38, who lives in Bangkok, had written a Facebook post last Saturday on finding a dead lizard in her half-eaten salted egg fish skin packet. Her post made headlines worldwide, including in Newsweek and the Jakarta Post.

Some experts reckon founder Irvin Gunawan's apology – in the form of a statement posted on Irvins' Facebook and Instagram accounts on Wednesday – would help repair the damage done to the brand's reputation.

But Dr Sharon Ng, an associate professor of Nanyang Technological University's division of marketing and international business, noted that Irvins has not yet been able to provide an explanation for what happened.

"This still leaves a fear that the problem is more systemic and simply telling customers that their product is safe is not enough to as-

suage people's fear," she said.

Brand Finance Asia Pacific managing director Samir Dixit said that with the saga blowing up online, Irvins could face a short-term impact to its revenue and even lose some market share, especially with other copycat brands already in the market. But in his view, the apology shows the company is sincere about resolving the issue.

"If the brand name is strong, people are usually more forgiving," added Mr Dixit.

Singapore University of Social Sciences' School of Business senior

ALLAYING FEARS continued on B2

EXPLANATION NEEDED

Customers and the rest of the market will definitely want to follow up on what happened. Competitors could also take advantage of Irvins' crisis.



DR LAU KONG CHEEN senior marketing lecturer at Singapore University of Social Sciences' School of Business.



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Media tour of facility suggested to assure consumers



Customer Jane Holloway wrote in a Facebook post last Saturday that she found a dead lizard in her half-eaten salted egg fish skin packet. PHOTOS: STOMP

FROM B1

marketing lecturer Lau Kong Cheen agreed, saying that Irvins had been “quick to recognise the issue, how the customers felt, and did not create excuses”.

But he also pointed out that the statement was carefully crafted and Irvins had stopped short of admitting that the fiasco was its fault.

“Nevertheless, the message did come promptly and was in a sincere tone. This helped a lot as most customers are easily touched with sincerity,” he added.

Dr Lau also said Irvins’ apology cannot be “one-off”.

“Customers and the rest of the market will definitely want to follow up on what happened. Competitors could also take advantage of Irvins’ crisis,” he noted, adding that this is why the brand has to continue communicating with its customers and improving its image.

Meanwhile, another customer has come forward to say she also found a lizard in her snack.

Commenting on Irvins’ apology on its Instagram page, user el3na claimed she encountered “the same issue” in April last year.

A post on her Instagram account dated April 12 last year shows a photo of a lizard lying among what appear to be salted egg crumbs. The post was captioned “@irvinsaltedegg .. on trend with the #crispyrendang.. we got #crispylizard”.

In her recent comment, el3na said Irvins had at the time offered a refund on the condition that she fly to Singapore and hand in the package. “No apologies were issued back then. Appreciate that you provide explanations this time around,” she wrote.

Irvins has yet to respond to queries from The Straits Times regarding the latest allegations.

Mr Gunawan had earlier declined to comment further on the first case, citing ongoing investigations by the company and Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority.

In response to queries, the Consumers Association of Singapore said it has not received any complaints against Irvins.

Irvins Salted Egg, which has at least 13 outlets in Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines, manufactures all its products here.

It had in December moved to a new production facility, where Mr Gunawan said that its “hygiene and checking procedures are much, much stricter”.

Mr Shawn Lee, 22, a retail assistant who works in Plaza Singapura, where one of the outlets is located, said the incident did not affect his impression of the brand.

He added: “I don’t think it’s a big deal, and the way the company handled it was quite good. It was very upfront.”

Thai tourist and engineer Maneerat Thimasarn, 28, was not deterred by the news either – he bought six packets of the fish skin snack from the VivoCity outlet.

“Some people are particular about things like (the lizard incident), some are not. I’m okay. I don’t think it’s Irvins’ fault. Anything can happen to anyone.”

Mr Dixit suggested that Irvins offer a media tour of its facilities as a way to allay concerns.

“This will instil trust and faith in the brand. It can do it any time and it should do it proactively, not necessarily wait till after the authorities are done with investigations,” he said.

“If it takes further steps to share the investigations’ outcomes, this will be good for it as it shows its commitment to transparency and customer service.”

nghuiwen@sph.com.sg
harizbah@sph.com.sg

Additional reporting by Jolene Ang

13

At least this number of Irvins Salted Egg outlets in Singapore, Hong Kong and the Philippines. All its products are manufactured in Singapore.

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The River Hongbao 2019 committee (pictured from left) includes Mr Perng Peck Seng (programme chairman), Mr Henry Kwek Hian Chuan (vice-chairman), Mr Ang Wei Neng (chairman), Mr John Teo Woon Keng (treasurer) and Mr Lim Wee Khoo (committee member). ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN



12-minute fireworks displays for River Hongbao 2019

They will be created by international teams, with different themes each of the four nights

Cheryl Teh

Fireworks displays by award-winning artists from Australia, China, Italy and the United States will light up this year's River Hongbao.

These 12-minute fireworks displays – the longest so far at the annual Chinese New Year festival – will take place on four nights (Feb 3, 4, 9 and 10), with each display planned by teams from a different country and featuring a different theme.

The international teams have created fireworks shows in places such as San Francisco's Golden Gate Bridge and the Sydney Harbour Bridge, as well as at the Beijing and London Olympics.

This is the 33rd edition of River Hongbao and it also coincides with the bicentennial commemoration.

"We have pulled out all the stops to make it a stand-out celebration," said Mr Ang Wei Neng, chairman of this year's River Hongbao organis-

ing committee.

Mr Ang, who is an MP for Jurong GRC, said River Hongbao 2019 is the first major event of the year in Singapore and it is expected to draw more than a million people.

The event has been part of Singapore's Chinese New Year festivities since 1987. It drew 1.45 million visitors last year and featured fireworks displays, each lasting about three minutes.

He said: "It is an opportunity for Singaporeans of all ages to enjoy the majestic fireworks, have fun with the exhibits and participate through technology and social media."

The fireworks displays are sponsored by DBS, Singapore Press Holdings and Kuan Yin Thong Hood Cho Temple, among others.

The organisers said that the festival will remain deeply anchored in heritage, while integrating technology-inspired features to engage visitors.

One highlight this year is an interactive exhibition in a junk boat,



The event, coinciding with this year's bicentennial commemoration, will feature a dragon forming the number "200". PHOTO: RIVER HONGBAO ORGANISING COMMITTEE

which showcases 700 years of Singapore's history. Curated by the Sun Yat Sen Nanyang Memorial Hall and the Singapore Bicentennial Office, the exhibition features a three-minute animation tracing Singapore's history from 1820 to 1920 in colourful detail.

Visitors can expect favourites like the Zodiac animal lanterns and the giant God of Fortune lantern, as well as new features, such as a wishing well in the shape of Suntec City's Fountain of Wealth.

The festival has integrated some new "insta-worthy" elements this year, including a majestic dragon

forming the shape of the number "200" at the main entrance.

Also on show will be a lantern inspired by paintings on Chinese scrolls, featuring the Unesco-listed Singapore Botanic Gardens and scenes from the founding of modern Singapore.

River Hongbao 2019 will be held at The Float @ Marina Bay from Feb 3 to Feb 10, daily from 2pm to 11pm. The opening hours will be extended to 1am on Chinese New Year's Eve on Feb 4. Admission is free.

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SingPost launches zodiac stamps to mark Year of the Pig

Timothy Goh

SingPost will launch a set of zodiac pig stamps today to usher in the Year of the Pig.

Collectors who have been buying zodiac animal stamps, released by SingPost every year since 2008, will be able to complete their 12-year series of stamps, as the pig is the final animal sign in the Chinese zodiac cycle.

Stamp sheets featuring the entire 12-animal zodiac series will also be on sale.

The pig stamp issue consists of three graphical illustrations of the animal, and is designed in a similar style as the rest of the stamps in the zodiac series.

The entire series of stamps has been illustrated by award-winning artist Leo Teck Chong, who has designed some 40 sets of national stamps since 1988.

Mr Leo, who is the founding executive creative director of adver-

tising and design firm O'Meteor Creative Artel, will be at the Philatelic Store@GPO from 5pm to 7pm today to autograph his stamp designs.

The stamps can be purchased at all post offices, the Philatelic Store@GPO and the Singapore Philatelic Museum. They can also be purchased online at <https://shop.singpost.com/>.

A set of mint stamps, which will retail for \$2.30, comes in three denominations: 1st local, 70 cents and \$1.30.

Pre-cancelled first-day covers affixed with the complete set of stamps and cancelled with a special zodiac pig postmark are available at \$3.75 each.

Presentation packs consisting of three mint stamps in a holder will be sold at \$4.80 each. Collector's sheets with commemorative \$5 and \$10 stamps may be purchased at \$16.80 each.

The special stamp sheets featuring the entire zodiac series come



(Clockwise from top left) The Zodiac Series Special Stamp Sheet I, Zodiac Series Collector's Sheet, Gem Encrusted Pig and Zodiac Pig Collector's Sheet. The entire series of stamps is illustrated by artist Leo Teck Chong. PHOTOS: SINGPOST

in a set of two sheets, each displaying six zodiac animals. Each sheet costs \$16.80.

Collector's sheets featuring all 12 zodiac animals will be available at \$8.80 each.

The complete zodiac series presentation pack, which features special rainbow foil stamping and an ultraviolet background, will be sold at \$38.

And for the first time, a special lo hei stamp featuring ingredients of the traditional Chinese New Year

raw fish salad will be sold at \$8.55.

Postage labels that are bought at SAM kiosks at the General Post Office from Jan 25 will also feature a limited-edition Chinese New Year design.

A full list of zodiac-themed gifts can be found at the Philatelic Store and at SingPost's online shop, as well as at the SingPost booth at the River Hongbao 2019 festival from Feb 3 to 10.

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Two firms fined \$77k for damaging water mains

Ng Huiwen

Two construction companies have been fined a total of \$77,000 for causing serious damage to potable water mains which resulted in water lost that was enough to fill three Olympic-size swimming pools.

National water agency PUB said in a statement yesterday that HSC Pipeline Engineering was fined \$47,000 for the damage, while SNK Engineering & Trading was fined \$30,000. Both companies were convicted in August last year.

The agency said the two cases led to a total water loss of more than 6,400 cubic metres, or nearly three Olympic-size swimming pools worth of water.

Investigations revealed that HSC Pipeline Engineering damaged a 1,200mm-diameter water main on Dec 17, 2016, while carrying out underground pipe-jacking works at a site at the junction of Woodlands Avenue 8 and Woodlands Avenue 9.

Before carrying out works in the vicinity of a water main, a contractor is required to carry out trench or hole trials to determine the location of the water main, including its alignment and depth, PUB said. It must also submit the necessary documents to get PUB's prior approval.

However, in HSC Pipeline Engineering's case, the construction company did not ascertain the physical location of the water main, and a jacking machine later hit it.

PUB shut down the water main af-

ter it received complaints, from commercial premises nearby, of discoloured water supply.

The firm had also damaged a 150mm-diameter pipe in June 2013. That offence was settled with a composition fine of \$3,000.

In the other case, SNK Engineering & Trading was charged with damaging a 300mm-diameter potable water main on Oct 2, 2017, at a Cecil Street construction site.

The firm was a sub-contractor carrying out removal works of an existing drain for the construction of a new drain and walkway. While hacking the existing drain, it punctured the water main, resulting in a water loss of 360 cu m.

PUB said the firm failed to abide by its protection guidelines on work-

ing near water mains, and did not take the necessary precautions to minimise the risk of damage.

In the PUB statement, director of water supply (network) department Ridzuan Ismail said the water mains are important infrastructure that carry treated water from PUB's water treatment plants and service reservoirs to homes and offices.

"In severe cases, damaged mains can lead to a disruption in water supply or discoloured water to nearby amenities and cause inconvenience to users," he said.

He also urged contractors to exercise caution when carrying out works near water mains and ensure adequate measures are in place.

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No more live shows at Blu Jaz Cafe

Nightspot cannot host public entertainment from next month after its appeal to keep licence is rejected

**Timothy Goh
and Lim Min Zhang**

Blu Jaz Cafe, in trouble for overcrowding, has lost its appeal to keep its entertainment licence.

The popular nightspot in Bali Lane, which is known for live music and comedy shows, will no longer be allowed to host any public entertainment from next month, said the police last night after an independent board rejected its appeal.

The Public Entertainment Appeal Board (PEAB) had considered a number of factors in arriving at its decision to reject the appeal on Monday, said the police.

This included Blu Jaz's contribution to the arts and music scene in Singapore, but also the severity of the overcrowding offences that resulted in serious public safety concerns.

Other factors taken into consideration by the PEAB, an independent board with representatives from the legal, social, business and health sectors, included the nightspot's track record and remedial actions taken.

Blu Jaz Cafe's director Aileen Tan declined comment when contacted last night.

Asked last October what would happen if the nightspot's appeal failed, she had said: "The rent here is astronomical. Without entertainment, we will not be able to sustain it and will eventually have to close shop."

Blu Jaz had been served notice on Oct 8 last year that its public entertainment licence would be terminated as it had exceeded the limit for demerit points because of previous offences.

These included failing in July 2016 and November 2017 to ensure its windows and doors were closed.

There were also two overcrowd-

ing offences. On April 28 last year, the police found there were more than 150 people on the second floor of the cafe, which had an approved occupancy load of only 30 people.

In a follow-up check on May 5, close to 200 people were found on the same floor. This was more than six times the approved occupancy load.

The police said such severe overcrowding would have posed major safety risks to patrons and staff, especially in the event of a fire, and could result in a stampede if there was a need for evacuation.

With PEAB's rejection of the appeal, the police will proceed to cancel Blu Jaz Cafe's existing public entertainment licence.

While the three-storey venue, which has been around for 13 years, will still be allowed to operate its cafe, it will not be able to provide any form of public entertainment on its premises from Feb 1.

Earlier, the Kampong Glam community had also rallied behind the cafe by sending letters of appeal to the police.

An online petition that Blu Jaz Cafe set up last October had more than 4,700 signatures as of last night.

Describing Blu Jaz as an institution, DJ KoFlow said the latest news meant a big loss to the local music scene.

He said: "There are already few venues in Singapore for musicians to perform, and places which support local talent so strongly and encourage them to experiment, even fewer."

"This freedom to improvise and be in a place to be inspired by other musicians is super important for developing artists. Over time, it (Blu Jaz) has even cultivated an audience which does not mind listening to something different."

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The three-storey Blu Jaz Cafe in Bali Lane, which has been around for 13 years, will still be allowed to operate its cafe, but it will not be able to provide any form of public entertainment from Feb 1. The cafe, in trouble for overcrowding, had been served notice last year that its public entertainment licence would be terminated as it had exceeded the limit for demerit points because of previous offences.
ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

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Geylang rock fest a hit but venue choice gets mixed reactions

Concert at event draws 6,000 but questions raised over holding it at Wisma Geylang Serai

Hariz Baharudin

A five-day rock music festival held last weekend at the Wisma Geylang Serai (WGS) hub has drawn mixed reactions from the community.

RockFest 2018, which ran from last Thursday to Sunday, featured performances by local Malay rock bands such as Diorama, Stereohype, Antologi and headliner Rusty Blade. There was a karaoke competition and food fair as well.

The Rusty Blade concert attracting an audience of more than 6,000, and the free event – organised by WGS and events company Orange Events & Media – were hailed by WGS as a success.

Senior Minister of State for Foreign Affairs and Defence Maliki Osman posted a video of the band's performance at the festival on Facebook on Sunday.

Dr Maliki, who is also Mayor of South East District, included a caption in his post that said: "What better way to bring people together than to hold a good old-fashioned

#rockconcert and boy did we bring people together, over 6,000 participants!"

However, there were questions raised about the use of the venue for the concert.

In the Facebook group Suara Melayu Singapura, or Voices of Singapore Malays, user Sattar Bawany asked if WGS was the right venue for the event.

He said WGS serves as a hub for Malay cultural heritage in Singapore, and that Islamic values are the foundation of Malay culture. In his post, he asked: "Is rock really part of Malay culture in Singapore?"

The post drew mostly negative responses from those in the group, which has more than 5,000 members. Most of them said that they saw nothing wrong with the choice of venue.

Said Facebook user Abu Shahid Ul Haque: "It's okay. Nothing wrong with such a venue holding a rock concert. It's not a place of worship anyway. It's a cultural/public space."

Other users, like Shahlan S. Shahlan, said rock music is part of

Malay culture, too. Commenting on the post, he said: "When rock came to Singapore in the 70s, it was the Malays who understood and embraced the music."

Mr Sattar later posted a response, saying he was not against rock music or the bands that were featured.

He said he wanted to gather views on the issue. "The members here have provided their views, which I deeply respect and accept. For the record, I am not a fan nor against rock music."

When contacted by The Straits Times, a WGS spokesman declined to comment.

WGS opened its doors to the public in May last year, and has been the venue for events such as the Ramadan bazaar.

It houses facilities such as the Geylang Serai Community Club, the Geylang Serai Malay Heritage Gallery and the South East Community Development Council. It also has childcare and senior centres, food and beverage and retail outlets, as well as a family service centre on the premises.

WGS will be officially opened by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong later this month.

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Local rock band Rusty Blade performing at RockFest 2018, which ran from last Thursday to Sunday. The event also featured performances by other bands such as Diorama, as well as a karaoke competition and food fair. PHOTO: WISMA GEYLANG SERAI



Mr Lui Hock Seng is suffering from lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic system, and has undergone four rounds of chemotherapy, with two more rounds scheduled. He works as a cleaner at Singapore Press Holdings but is now on medical leave. ST PHOTO: WANG HUI FEN

Prize-winning amateur photographer undergoing treatment for cancer

Venessa Lee

A cleaner and amateur photographer, who held his first solo exhibition at the age of 81, is undergoing chemotherapy for cancer.

Mr Lui Hock Seng yesterday told The Straits Times he is suffering from lymphoma, a cancer of the lymphatic system.

He has undergone four rounds of chemotherapy, with two more rounds scheduled. He works as a cleaner at Singapore Press Holdings, which publishes The Straits Times, but is now on medical leave. "I don't see many people because my immune system is poor," he said in Mandarin during a phone interview.

Mr Lui had his first solo photo exhibition last year at Objectifs, a centre for photography and film located in Middle Road. Titled Passing Time, it showcased black and white photographs of Singapore

that he took in the 1960s and 1970s. His first photo book, bearing the same title, was later published by Objectifs.

Last August, Mr Lui experienced symptoms like breathlessness and occasional bleeding from the nose, but a doctor he consulted did not find anything wrong.

About a month later, he was in pain and went to a hospital's emergency department. Doctors found that a blood clot near his brain was pressing on his eye, causing the bleeding. He was diagnosed with lymphoma.

Mr Lui is married with three sons. His wife, 81, uses a wheelchair and is in an old folks' home.

He lives in a four-room Housing Board flat in Bishan with a son in his 50s, whose mobility is impaired. Another son, aged 44, has returned to Singapore to help care for Mr Lui, after working in Thailand for about eight years in the oil and gas industry.

"I cannot afford a helper. I'm happy that one of my sons has returned to care for me," said Mr Lui.

The former mechanic became interested in photography when he was a teenager in the late 1950s. A brother bought him his first camera, a German-made Rolleiflex, more than 50 years ago.

His works include images of a now-vanished Singapore, such as scenes of kampung life and Chinatown's snake-meat vendors. He has won prizes in several photography competitions over the years.

In April last year, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong shared a BBC video of Mr Lui in a Facebook post, calling him a "brilliant example of active ageing".

These days, Mr Lui has little inclination for photography. He said: "Now, I look like a 120-year-old man. The cancer came as a big shock. I want to be healthy again."

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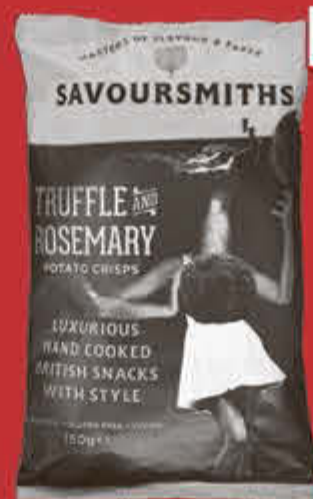


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Activist guilty of holding illegal public assembly

Jolovan Wham also found guilty on second charge of refusing to sign police statement after the 2016 event

Cara Wong

Activist Jolovan Wham was found guilty yesterday of organising a public assembly without a permit and refusing to sign his statement at the police station after the event.

The verdict marked the conclu-

sion of his trial, which began in October last year, after Wham contested the two charges laid against him in November 2017.

District Judge Kessler Soh found that the prosecution, led by Deputy Public Prosecutors Kumaresan Gohulabalan and Nicholas Wuan, had proven beyond reasonable doubt

that Wham, a social worker, was guilty of the two offences committed in late 2016.

Court documents showed that Wham organised an event entitled "Civil Disobedience and Social Move-

ments" at indoor event space The Agora in Sin Ming Lane on Nov 26, 2016. The event featured speeches by freelance journalist Kirsten Han, activist Seelan Palay and Hong Kong pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong, who spoke via a video call.

Despite being advised by a police

officer to apply for a permit for the event, Wham did not do so. Investigations began after the event ended, and Wham recorded his statement at a police station on Dec 20.

After learning that he would not be given a copy, Wham refused to sign it, Deputy Superintendent of Police Lee Ting Wei told the court.

Defence counsels Eugene Thuraisingam and Suang Wijaya argued that the requirement for a permit breached Wham's constitutional right to freedom of assembly and speech, and that the event did not qualify as an assembly. The lawyers said it was a discussion of general academic interest and did not seek to publicise any specific cause.

They further argued that Wham was not legally compelled to sign the police statement as it was "self-incriminatory".

But the DPPs said there was no basis that requiring a permit would breach Wham's constitutional right. That argument is vague and

misconceived, they added.

It was also clearly evident from his event's title that Wham had sought to publicise a cause, said the DPPs. The speakers at his event urged the public to consider the role of civil disobedience and democracy in building social movements for progress and change, the DPPs told the court.

The prosecution also argued that the investigating officer was legally competent to require Wham to sign the statement.

District Judge Soh agreed and said Wham's refusal to sign the statement was unjustified. He threw out the defence's other arguments. "I do not find the defence has raised any valid defence," said Judge Soh.

Wham faced four other similar charges and another count of vandalism, which have been stood down for now. He is out on bail and will be back in court later this month for his mitigation and sentencing.

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Jolovan Wham organised an event in 2016 entitled "Civil Disobedience and Social Movements", featuring speeches by freelance journalist Kirsten Han, activist Seelan Palay and Hong Kong pro-democracy activist Joshua Wong.

Coker Gyles Akinkumni Jagdeesh, a permanent resident who is currently serving his national service, pleaded guilty to molesting the victim after they attended a Sentosa Cove private party. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW



ting to know Coker but when the victim asked her about it, she denied it and laughed. After taking a shower, the victim's friend left in a taxi.

While waiting at the club's taxi pick-up point at around 9pm, the victim met Coker, who asked if she had a lighter. She replied that she was not a smoker.

While chatting, the victim told him that her friend was interested in him.

She then snapped a selfie with Coker to send to her friend.

Deputy Public Prosecutor Gregory Gan told District Judge Jasvender Kaur: "The accused began talking to the victim and told her he was a model. The accused then placed his right arm around the victim's shoulder."

"He told her that he was going for a house party and asked her if she wanted to come along. The victim declined the invitation and sought to leave."

Coker then made a lewd remark about her body.

When the victim backed away, he pulled her towards him and molested her.

"According to the victim, this touch lasted for around three seconds," the DPP added. "The victim was shocked and angry and she left the pick-up point."

She told her boyfriend and her friend about the incident later that evening and made a police report two days later.

Judge Kaur has called for a report to assess Coker's suitability for probation.

He was offered bail of \$5,000 and is expected to be sentenced on Jan 30.

For outraging the woman's modesty, he can be jailed for up to two years and be fined or caned.

ashaffiq@sph.com.sg

Model admits molesting Sentosa Cove party guest

Shaffiq Alkhatib

A woman who approached a male model after a Sentosa Cove private party ended up being molested by the Briton.

Singapore permanent resident Coker Gyles Akinkumni Jagdeesh, 21, who is currently serving his national service, pleaded guilty on Wednesday to one count of molestation.

Better known as Gyles Coker, he had starred in a music video with home-grown singer Tabitha Nauser for one of her singles, Rules. Coker had also appeared in numerous fashion spreads in magazines.

On Wednesday, the court heard that the party guest and her friend, both 21, were in a pool at the ONE*15 Marina Sentosa Cove club at around 7pm on Nov 18, 2017, when they spotted the model.

Her friend was interested in get-

Single punter wins \$9.7 million Toto prize



Punters queuing up to buy Toto tickets at the 7-Eleven outlet at Block 102 Yishun Avenue 5 yesterday. Last night, a single punter won the Group 1 cascade draw prize of \$9,731,377. The winning ticket was sold at FairPrice Changi Business Park Hypermarket. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

Two hit, scalded by trio in revenge attack

A man and his sister were invited for a Hari Raya celebration but were ambushed and assaulted instead by a trio out for revenge.

The siblings were beaten up and scalded with hot water in a flat in Spooner Road, Tanjong Pagar, on July 8 last year.

Yesterday, part-time cleaner Nurhanifah Juma'at became the

first of three people involved in the attack to plead guilty, to a count of voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons and means.

The 27-year-old had boiled water just before the siblings arrived at the flat and filmed the vicious assault, which left the victims with second-degree burns all over their bodies.

The court heard that it all started on July 7 last year when Nurhanifah agreed to her friend Norhayati Jaffar's revenge plan.

Norhayati, 35, was angry that day after watching a video clip on Facebook which showed her younger brother being beaten up by a group that included Mr Muhammad Faizal Omar, 27, while his sister Nur Farahitika Omar, 25, watched on.

Norhayati then hatched a plan to take revenge, and invited the siblings to her home, saying it was a Hari Raya celebration and she had something urgent to talk to them about, said Deputy Public Prosecutor Sheryl Yeo.

Norhayati told Nurhanifah to film the attack on her phone and to boil water for the attack. She also roped in her other brother Muhammad Bakhtiyar Jaffar, 33.

When the victims arrived at the

flat past midnight on July 8 with two other friends, Norhayati locked the gate behind them and commenced the attack with her brother.

Norhayati repeatedly hit Ms Farahitika with a bamboo stick and stomped on her stomach, while Bakhtiyar pummelled and kicked Mr Faizal.

Norhayati also used hot water to scald Ms Farahitika on her neck, back and right ear before striking her neck with the water jug. After Ms Farahitika escaped with her two friends, Norhayati joined Bakhtiyar in his attack on Mr Faizal using a bamboo stick. Mr Faizal was also scalded with hot water on the left side of his body by Norhayati, before managing to escape eventually.

Nurhanifah filmed the entire three- to four-minute-long assault. She did not do anything to stop her friends during the assault, said DPP Yeo. Nurhanifah will return to court next week for mitigation and sentencing, while the other two will be dealt with in court at a later date.

For voluntarily causing hurt by dangerous weapons, she could be jailed for up to seven years and fined.

Cara Wong

Flat set ablaze by Molotov cocktail: Youth gets reformatory training

A young man who acted for a loan shark and threw a Molotov cocktail at a flat was sentenced to six months' reformatory training yesterday.

Lu Mingduo, 20, had earlier pleaded guilty to acting on behalf of a moneylender when he carried out the deed on Aug 8 last year.

Reformatory training is meant for those between 14 and 21 years old. It involves young offenders being detained in a structured environment for at least six months.

According to court documents, an unlicensed loan shark known only as "Sunny", had called Lu on Aug 7, and threatened to harass him if he did not heed his orders. Under the loan shark's instructions, Lu prepared a Molotov cocktail – a bottle of paint thinner with a towel stuffed within – and threw it at a Jurong

West flat that the loan shark claimed was a debtor's home. Lu lives in a neighbouring unit.

The cocktail caused a nearby stationary electric bicycle to catch fire and explode.

The debtor's 64-year-old father and 13-year-old sister had to climb out of the master bedroom window and stand on a ledge to escape the blaze. They were later rescued by the Singapore Civil Defence Force.

A 51-year-old neighbour suffered burn injuries on his arms, face and toes, and smoke inhalation injuries. Restoration works to the damaged Housing Board block was said to cost more than \$10,000.

In court yesterday, Lu's defence counsel Thomas Tan asked for a probation report to be called instead to assess his suitability for probation. A reformatory training sentence would disrupt Lu's graduation and his work, he said. Lu's occupation was not stated in court papers.

District Judge Ong Hian Sun did not accede to the defence counsel's call, given the consequences of Lu's actions. Lu will be appealing against his sentence, and is currently out on bail of \$20,000.

Cara Wong

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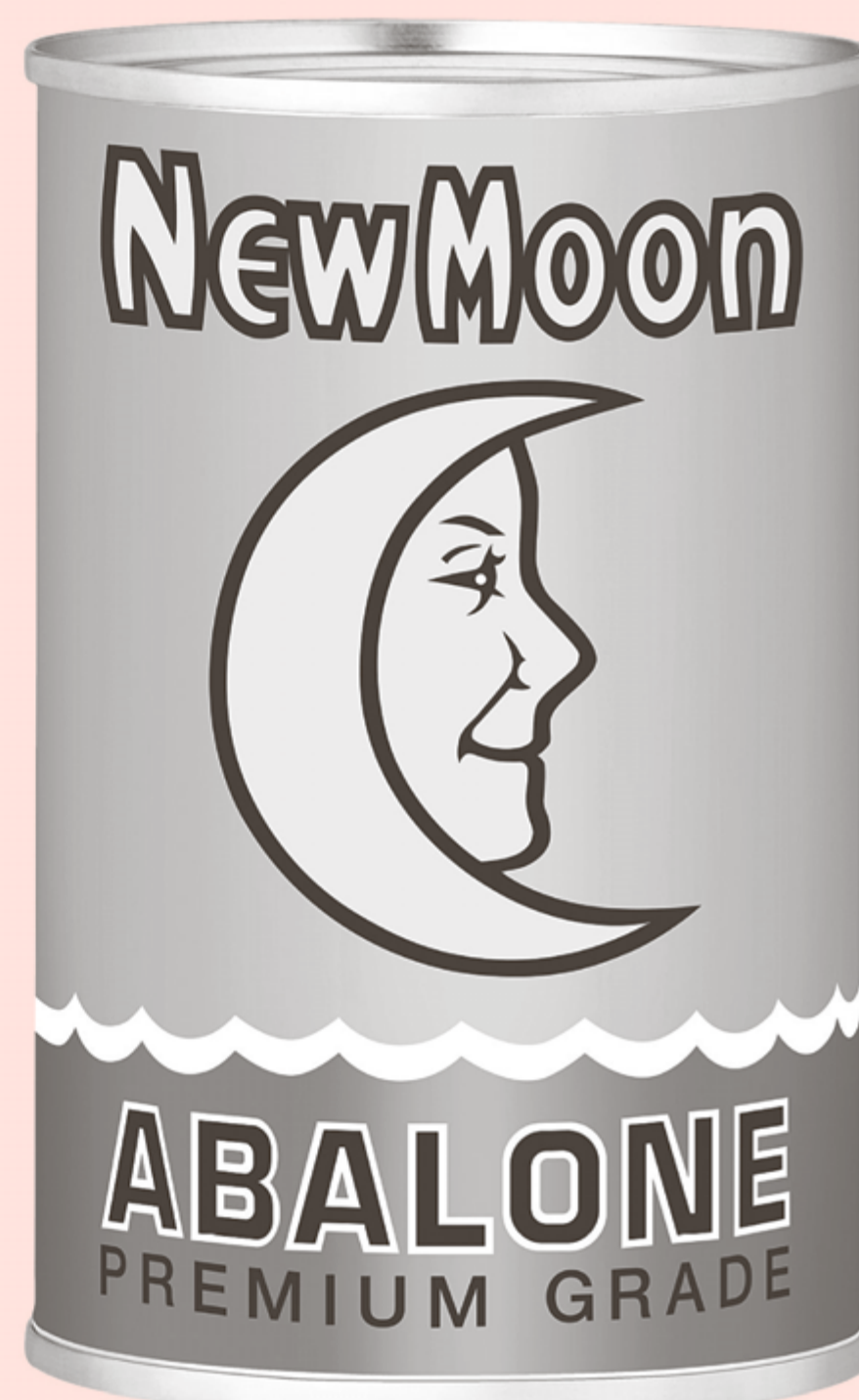


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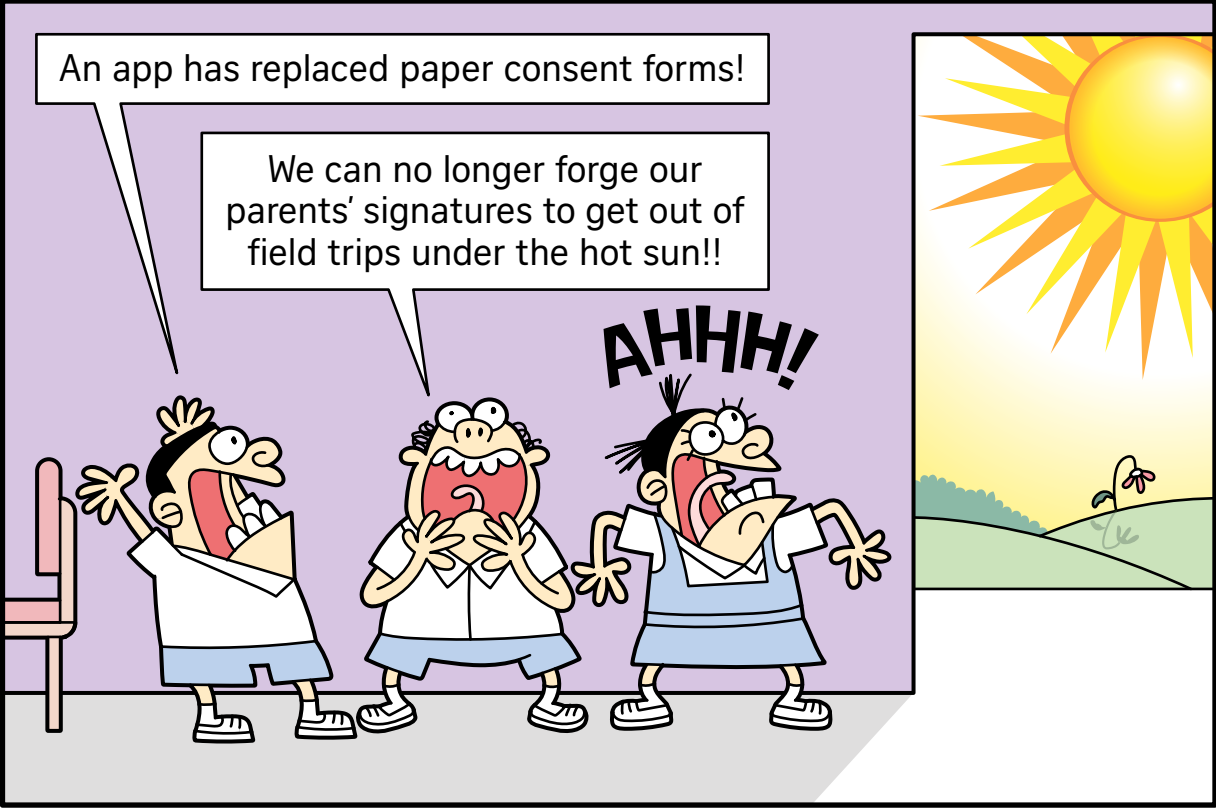
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New mobile app connects parents to schools



Employee or independent contractor – law needs to be clear

The recent case in which the Central Provident Fund (CPF) Board applied to recover nearly \$417,000 in alleged CPF arrears from Jurong Country Club highlights the highly unsatisfactory state of the current legal distinction between employees and independent contractors (Judge rejects CPF Board's bid to recover \$417k in alleged arrears; Dec 25, 2018).

District Judge Jasbendar Kaur said that an inquiry into whether a person is an employee or independent contractor has to be fact-based, where a multi-faceted test is applied.

The complexity of this legal test is unsatisfactory as it means that in many cases where workers are in less-structured working

arrangements, parties are not able to say if the worker should be legally treated as an employee or independent contractor.

We have encountered this question in our work with low-income women engaged in part-time work.

For example, are cleaners who come in on a part-time but regular basis independent contractors or part-time employees?

What about child minders who come in on an ad hoc basis?

We tried to ask CPF and the Ministry of Manpower for advice, but they found it difficult to give a definitive answer due to the complexity of the legal test.

This uncertainty makes it difficult for employers to do the right thing and, from our

experience, some employers do take advantage of such situations to deny workers their rights.

This law needs to be reviewed urgently, given the sharp rise in gig contracts in the new economy.

In doing this, we should keep in view the need to promote practices that are fair to low-income workers.

If the Government prefers not to change the current legal test, it can consider providing that, regardless of type of work contract, people who work a certain number of hours per month must be given CPF contributions and have certain other rights such as annual leave.

Corinna Lim (Ms)
Executive director
Aware

Offer free travel passes to those above 80

It is laudable that the Government has given transport vouchers to help needy families cope with their transport expenditure (Small mercies in one of the biggest fare hikes in years; Oct 31, 2018).

Many people from the Pioneer Generation have benefited from this handout.

Perhaps the Government could consider giving free transport passes to those above 80 years old.

This will relieve them of some of their daily expenses and encourage more family bonding time too, as these people will be able to travel for free to visit their friends and relatives.

With free travel passes, they will also be encouraged to move around more and can engage in more activities, which may keep dementia and depression at bay.

Tan Keong Boon

More changes need to be made in security industry

I support the strengthened penalties for errant behaviour by security officers as these will bring about better discipline, responsibility and professionalism in the security industry (Errant private security officers face stiffer penalties; Dec 24, 2018).

However, harsher punishment in itself will not make the security industry attractive.

To change the image of the security industry and entice

better-educated, young Singaporeans, the industry should offer better salaries, perks and welfare, as well as shorter working hours.

I also agree with Mr Liu Fook Thim that security officers should be tasked with only security duties and should not be assigned additional non-related tasks such as watering plants, collecting mail and receiving deliveries (Clarify role and duties of security officers; Jan 1).

Such non-security tasks should be rightfully assigned to non-security staff.

The current practice of making security officers work a stretch of 12 hours, with eight hours of regular work and four hours of overtime work, is unrealistic.

To do their job well, security officers need to be mentally alert and physically fit.

After working for eight hours, security officers cannot be expected to be alert and

productive enough to work for another four hours.

I have heard that security officers who opt for the eight-hour shifts earn much less too.

This is probably to discourage them from opting for the shorter shifts.

It is time for the security industry to implement a normal eight-hourly, three-shift system so as to make it more professional and attractive to more people.

Pavithran Vidyadharan

THE STRAITS TIMES

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Harbhajan Singh The veteran nurse led a team of more than 100 nurses in the 2003 fight against Sars, the severe acute respiratory syndrome. Today, at the age of 78, Harbhajan Singh continues to work at the very hospital he first joined as a young man aged 25.	Annabelle Kwok At 26, NeuralBay founder Annabelle Kwok has already made her mark in artificial intelligence. She also wears many other hats as mathematician, hardware hacker, sportswoman, arts performer and do-gooder.	Teo Yee Ming Hai Sing Catholic School teacher Teo Yee Ming has led the school's robotics team from obscurity to success on the world stage. The school team has won the world's most prestigious robotics competition four times.	Elizabeth Tan Entrepreneur Elizabeth Tan grew her father's shoe shop into a global chain with 50 stores. She is also a humanitarian who set up Sight To Sky, a charity which organises annual mobile eye clinics in India, Pakistan and Nepal.	Bjorn Low From a small social enterprise, Bjorn Low's Edible Garden City is now a thriving business. It designs and builds food gardens, supplies greens to restaurants, and trains and employs people from vulnerable or marginalised segments.	Kenneth and Adeline Thong The Thongs not only open their house to young people without a roof over their heads to live in for free, but they also recreate a home within a house for them. Both left their jobs to be present in the lives of young people.
Siti Noor Mastura Siti Noor Mastura rose above childhood poverty and overcame the odds to launch two non-profit groups. One distributes halal groceries to the poor and the other promotes honest discussions between people of different faiths.	Nizar Mohamed Shariff and Free Food For All In 2014, Nizar Mohamed Shariff set up Free Food For All, a charity that provides free cooked meals for the needy. The charity cooks up to 100,000 meals a year for 3,000 elderly or low-income residents living in rental flats.	Douglas Yeo and Poh Kok Wee Veteran diver Douglas Yeo, 50, risked his life to help with the evacuation of the last five Thai boys who were trapped in a cave. Age also did not deter Poh Kok Wee, 57, from helping scout for alternative cave entrances to reach the boys.	Teo You Yenn Sociology researcher Teo You Yenn published a book of essays on the lives of people who live in HDB rental flats. This Is What Inequality Looks Like is a bestseller that has sparked a national conversation on socio-economic inequality in Singapore.	Robert Chew Robert Chew, 69, has donated blood a total of 184 times. He started when he was 18 years old and donates blood three to four times a year. He has drained his body of blood 18 times over his lifetime as a donor.	

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Don't judge job candidates by past failures

A paradigm shift in thinking is needed in our education system as highlighted by Mr Seah Yam Meng (Our learning culture needs a reset; Jan 2).

However, this shift must extend beyond the education system. While the Ministry of Education has made an admirable effort to de-emphasise academic achievements, I was shocked to read that employers still asked an applicant with a university degree for his O-level and even PSLE certificates ('I flunked the IP':

Integrated Programme dropout shares his story; Dec 30, 2018).

This suggests that employers still value a record of consistent academic achievement, which incentivises students to avoid risks, take well-trodden paths, and chase good grades at all costs.

My son goes to university in the United States and recently found a job there. Throughout the recruitment process, employers rarely asked for his university transcript, and he was not questioned about his Grade Point

Average or record in high school.

Employers instead focused on experiences and skills that were relevant to the company.

I urge the Government to take the lead by asking candidates applying for positions in the civil service to only provide information about their highest qualification.

Candidates should not continue to be defined by failures in examinations long after the knowledge and skills tested have ceased to be relevant.

Dennis Chan Hoi Yim

Parents must be that sane voice in children's lives

My heart goes out to senior tech correspondent Irene Tham whose article resonated with me (Only in Primary 4 and told to prepare for PSLE; Jan 3).

Memories of the pressure I subjected my own daughter to back in 2014 when she was in Primary 6 came flooding back.

Unlike Ms Tham, I only started preparing my daughter in earnest in her PSLE year.

While I am not the archetypal "tiger mum", I felt guilt whenever I wondered whether I was doing enough to help my daughter.

What if she didn't get into a good school? Will her future be blighted because of her low PSLE score?

These were the worries that plagued me and I believe most parents find themselves in the same quandary.

As observed by Ms Tham, the rigour and difficulty of the curriculum worsens in the upper primary levels.

School teachers are stretched in catering to a class of over 30 students. Individualised or small-group tuition may thus be a boon, especially for weaker students who may not have a stay-at-home parent who is able to coach them.

It takes a resolute parent to swim against the tide and not get sucked into this vortex of pushing our

children to excel academically.

We need to be mindful of our children's well-being, to fully appreciate their strengths and weaknesses and to give them their childhood.

We must not allow our children to define their worth solely in terms of academic achievement.

In the new economy, 21st century competencies such as communication, creativity, problem-solving, as well as values like resilience, empathy and the ability to collaborate with others, are far more important indicators of success.

Admittedly, it's not easy to resist jumping on the bandwagon. But only we as parents can safeguard our children's happiness and be the bulwark that moderates against the excessive pressures and demands of society.

Marietta Koh (Mrs)

Police treat sex crime victims with professionalism

We refer to Ms Candice Lai Sui Wan's letter (Puzzled by officer's handling of sexual harassment case; Dec 27, 2018).

The police have both male and female officers who are trained in investigating sexual crimes and providing victims with the care and support that they may need.

Victims can also request to speak with an investigation officer (IO) of

their gender.

Ms Lai's friend was interviewed by a female IO after she made such a request.

The interview rooms in the Police Cantonment Complex (PCC), where Ms Lai's friend was interviewed, are windowless by design to afford the victim privacy.

Ms Lai was not able to accompany her friend for the

interview because of the need to preserve the confidentiality of police investigations.

The police can arrange for professional counselling and victim care support for sexual crime victims.

The IO had offered such support to Ms Lai's friend, which she declined.

As for Ms Lai's point about the IO

Excerpts from readers' letters

PAINTING IS A HOPEFUL START

It was interesting to read about Teng Kai Wei's painting of the Raffles statue in Boat Quay (Raffles does a 'disappearing' act in North Boat Quay for Singapore Bicentennial; Jan 3).

While some may cry "sacrilege", it's actually a meaningful and hopeful start leading to the bicentennial celebrations.

The role of Stamford Raffles will always be important to the Singapore history – even though more recent literature has given other players, like William Farquhar, important roles.

But from a branding perspective, the Singapore history is so much more than that – so it's impressive to see that a local artist has found a clever way to highlight Raffles' contribution while also showing that he's not the only player over several centuries of development.

Jorg Dietzel

PERSONAL DATA RISK

I would like to highlight that the Personal Data Protection Act should also regulate employers and recruiting companies (All eyes on steps to protect personal data; Dec 24, 2018).

Many of them currently require candidates to provide personal information such as NRIC number, date of birth and detailed address when they apply for jobs. They should not be allowed to do this

until the candidate is offered the job.

Ng Sung Nang

PROMOTE GOOD ENGLISH

To promote good language skills, The Straits Times should create a daily "English Literature" section, which publishes carefully-curated works that demonstrate a strong command of the English language. These could include creative works such as plays and poetry.

This section would cultivate good language skills, especially among young readers.

Terence Teo Li Yang

MESS AT HDB BLOCK

Almost daily, there is a mess at Block 316 Jurong East Street 32. Residents dump their unwanted items illegally outside the rubbish chute in the lift lobby, in cartons or plastic bags. A scavenger then goes through the items, keeping those that can be sold and throwing out the rest.

Fortunately, the block has a responsible cleaner who cleans up the mess before the town council can be made aware of the littering and illegal dumping.

Something needs to be done.

Patricia Lai (Ms)



IMDA should monitor SingPost's service standards

I agree with Mr Sean Lim Wei Xin (SingPost should focus on mail delivery first; Dec 24, 2018) and Mr Chua Chun Wei (Unhappy with SingPost's service standards; Jan 2).

There have been many complaints about SingPost's falling service standards at my estate.

I have even heard of people ending up with late payment charges because they did not receive their bills.

There are also cases of people receiving memos at their doorsteps stating that "no one was at home", even when they were waiting there for the parcel to be delivered.

When asked, the postmen often tell me that they are understaffed, so quality is compromised in order to complete their increased daily workload.

Complaints to the Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) have been met with a similar response, that while it acknowledges the importance of a good and reliable public postal service system, it seeks our understanding that as mail delivery is a labour-intensive business, there may be instances in which mail can be lost or wrongly delivered due to operational reasons on the ground.

I hope IMDA will seriously look into this issue and start monitoring SingPost's service standards to ensure that incidents of lost or wrongly delivered mail are minimised.

Wong Boon Hong

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Dates: Jan 30, Feb 21, 2019
Time: 10am to 6pm (including lunch and tea breaks)
Venue: Level 8 Tower Block SPH News Centre 1000 Toa Payoh North
Fee: \$499 a person

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The Writing Coach
Felix Cheong has published 13 books across different genres, from poetry to short stories. A recipient of the Young Artist award, he has worked in the media industry for more than 20 years. He holds a master's degree in creative writing and currently teaches journalism at the University of Newcastle and Murdoch University.

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